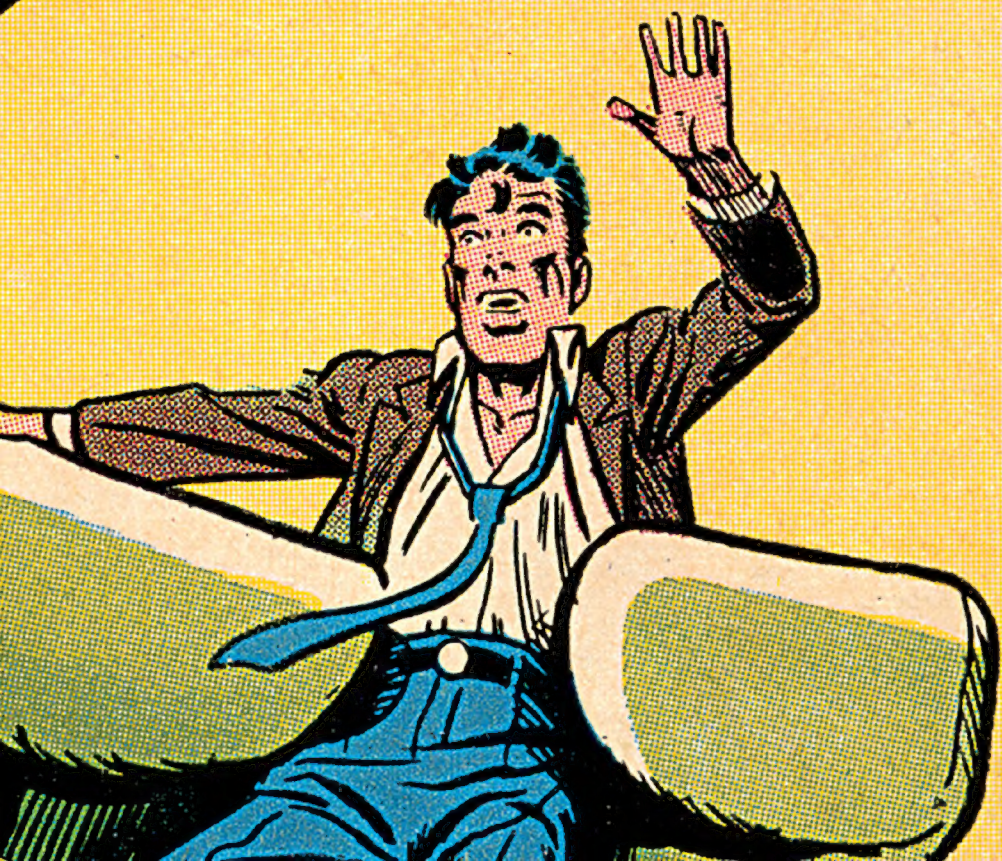


UNEXPLORED  
WORLDS



THE  
**STEVE DITKO**  
**ARCHIVES**  
VOL. 2



**UNEXPLORED WORLDS**







# UNEXPLORED WORLDS

THE **STEVE DITKO**

**ARCHIVES**  
VOL. 2

EDITED BY BLAKE BELL  
FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS



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Steve Ditko  
nearly died before  
producing the work  
contained in this volume.

The world would have lost not just the Amazing Spider-Man, Dr. Strange or his Ayn Rand-inspired Mr. A., but also over 1000 pages of work that marked Ditko's artistic progression towards the creation of those seminal characters.

The road to becoming a working comic-book artist began when Ditko left his home town of Johnstown, Pennsylvania in 1950 for New York City. Ditko had enlisted in the Army in October of 1945, a month after Japan surrendered to end WWII, and thus was able to secure funding from the G.I. Bill. This allowed him to study in Manhattan at The Cartoonists & Illustrators School (now The School of Visual Arts) under the tutelage of his boyhood hero, Batman artist (and creator of The Joker) Jerry Robinson.

These formative years of Ditko were also influenced by Will Eisner (creator of *The Spirit* newspaper strip), Mort Meskin (on DC Comics features *The Vigilante* and *Johnny Quick*), Joe Kubert (*Tor*) and Wally Wood (science-fiction titles for Avon, Fox and EC Comics). Once Ditko had amassed a portfolio, he made the rounds at the New York publishing houses, being refused often, until he finally had his first work published in 1953.

# INTRODUCTION

BY BLAKE BELL



Ditko in his studio shared with Eric Stanton, 1959



AT EXACTLY 6 MINUTES AFTER MIDNIGHT, ON MARCH 28<sup>TH</sup>, 1875, NAT KRUGER AND WARREN MACE RACED FROM THE LOS MURALLOS BANK WITH \$20,000 IN STOLEN MONEY!

WE DID IT!  
WE GOT THE  
MONEY! NOW  
LET'S RIDE!

BUT WHY'D YUH  
SHOOT THAT OLD  
WATCHMAN, KRUGER?  
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO!



by Stan Lee  
&  
Steve Ditko

After a quick stint that summer working with Meskin at the Joe Simon/Jack Kirby studio, Ditko began a relationship with Charlton Comics in 1954 that would last over 40 years. This was in the "Pre-Code" era — a point in history when comic-book artists and publishers did their level best to outduel each other in attracting young audiences with lurid tales of horror, murder, dismemberment, crime, and all kinds of sordid evils. The problem was that it also attracted the attention of politicians, media, and the PTA. Mounting pressure from distributors as well pushed comic-book publishers to enact the Comics Code Authority (CCA) on October 26, 1954. The CCA was the industry's "in-house censor" that all pages of every comic had to be vetted by before hitting newsstands.

The capitulation had a negative effect on the publishers themselves and on the integrity of the material. The Code's regulations seemed specifically written to target the gold standard of the era, EC Comics. EC tried watered-down versions of their books, but eventually were only left with *Mad Magazine* after they had switched it to a magazine format (thereby maneuvering around the CCA's reach). The remaining artists that could find work knew going in that severe restrictions were enforced on their work before ideas even formulated in their minds. Very few had the creative pedigree to wring lemonade from the lemons. Fortunately, Steve Ditko was one, and this volume illustrates that it was Ditko's rendering skills and sequential storytelling ability that was his strength and not whatever gore or violence he could add as a cherry on top.

This is fortunate because volume 1 of The Steve Ditko Archives — *Strange Suspense* — featured all the stories Ditko did leading up to the inception of the CCA. What makes this second volume so noteworthy is seeing the monumental leap Ditko made in the quality of his work. That leap can be partially explained by the circumstances that arose in the spring of 1954 that led Ditko to knock on death's door. Fran Matera, an artist who also worked for Charlton, described Ditko's condition as such: "I remember watching Steve Ditko draw comics in the office. He had tuberculosis. A woman named Angie who worked there said, 'He's not long for this world.'"

Treatment of the illness was in its early days and recovery was not a given. Ditko's mother travelled by train to retrieve her ailing son so that he could recover in Johnstown at the family home. It took more than a full year — into

the fall of 1955 — before Ditko sufficiently recovered to return to what was a completely different landscape in New York City. With the CCA's impact on the industry having taken hold, pickings were slim for the hacks that had previously supplied the bulk of Pre-Code output. Ditko, however, hadn't wasted away his time while recovering. He had kept refining his style and one publisher in particular took note — Marvel Comics.

Ironically, it was only Mother Nature that first drew Steve Ditko and Stan Lee together. On Thursday, August 18, 1955, the Charlton Comics operation in Derby Connecticut was devastated by Hurricane Diane. Across the region, hundreds were killed and the flooding at Charlton's 129 acres of property severely damaged its office space and printing presses. It would take several months to recover, so Ditko took another stab at Marvel Comics in New York, bringing his portfolio to Stan Lee.

The Marvel Comics of late 1955 was comparatively unaffected by the CCA impact, but only because it, like the comic-publishing wing of Charlton, was part of a much larger corporation. Marvel Comics' owner Martin Goodman had entered the racket as far back as 1932 publishing "pulp" (magazines printed on low-quality pulp paper featuring sensationalistic and lurid fiction tales). He was talked into the comic-book business in 1939, publishing *Marvel Comics* #1 (featuring Bill Everett's Sub-Mariner and Carl Burgos' Human Torch characters) under the banner of Timely Publications.

The company that became more famously known in the 1960s as Marvel Comics — thanks to the advent of the Spider-Man, Iron Man, Thor and Fantastic Four strips — was part of a web of companies and imprints that Goodman moved around like a shell game. Most knew the comics division in the 1940s as "Timely." Others knew it in the 1950s by the name on the checks — "Magazine Management Inc.," the umbrella name that housed Goodman's comics and other entities like his adventure and soft-core men's magazines, as well as his puzzle and celebrity periodicals. Most fans, however, still refer to the company in the 1950s as the "Atlas era" owing to Goodman's feeble attempt at coining a brand by using the name of his distribution company that handled all of his publications.

Goodman's success in business was the ability to recognize and ride any trend, and by flooding the market with product to keep his



market share strong. He also occasionally got lucky with a new hire. When a Goodman family member needed a job for a young relative, Goodman hired Stanley Lieber as a gopher in the office. But the man who would change his name to Stan Lee had a knack for storytelling, and also an ability to inspire and organize people. This led him to being granted the title of head editor of the comics division at the end of 1941, practically still a teenager.

Chasing trends was still the *modus operandi* in late 1955 when Ditko walked through the door of the Marvel offices on Madison Avenue. At the time, Marvel was not in the superhero publishing game. Instead, they peddled watered-down EC knock-offs; (predominantly) four-page stories collected by genre: light suspense and fantasy fare, as well as romance, western and war.

This period is significant, however, in Marvel's history for two reasons. First, all the members of what became known in the 1960s as the "Marvel Bullpen" were ensconced — Jack Kirby, John Buscema, Gene Colan, and John Romita all freelanced, and Bill Everett (co-creator of Daredevil) worked on staff. Second, the first collaboration between Stan Lee and Steve Ditko saw the light of day as, of all things, a Western short story, "The Badmen" from *2-Gun Western* #4 (May '56). And while Marvel didn't pay what DC Comics did, just about anyone paid better than Charlton had...and a lot better than what Charlton was going to be paying.

In late 1956, with the Derby operation fully recovered from its flooding (and with not enough volume coming from Marvel), Ditko rejoined Charlton. And even though its owners had been accorded millions of dollars in flood relief from the government, they told the talent a much different tale of woe. Pretending they were poor and needed the creative staff's help to dig their way out, they offered everyone work...at half the pay they had been receiving prior to the flooding (which was already half of industry standards).

The "carrot" that Charlton offered in return was two-fold: 1) volume and timely payment; 2) no editorial interference (which meant no revisions that would slow an artist's productivity). Put these two factors together and an enterprising professional that wasn't able to crack DC Comics or Marvel could make a reasonable living. Unfortunately, while Charlton achieved its goal of maximum output, the effect of the carrot caused Charlton to present itself as the nadir of the industry for consistent (if any) quality of work.

While not credited in the comic books themselves, the majority of the stories within this volume were likely written by Charlton's lead writer, Joe Gill. Post-flood, he saw his page rate drop to

a measly two dollars a page. "If I didn't write fast," said Gill, "I wouldn't have been able to get along under that price structure. There was the pride of doing good work, but it was impossible to do our best work consistently over a period of time...If you want to know why Charlton comics were so shitty, that's one of the reasons."

But what separated Ditko from his peers at Charlton was not just his innate artistic ability — it was also his professionalism and dedication to his craft. While others like Gill were cutting corners to make a buck, Ditko's association with Charlton cemented his reputation as a man whose sole purpose on this Earth was to be a comic-book artist. "Steve has ethics and stern beliefs, and he kept them," said Gill. "He wouldn't do bad work just because he was getting bad pay. He tried to do just as well for Charlton as he was for Marvel." (Hence the reason why almost no one can remember any work from 1950s Charlton books *but* Ditko's.)

It certainly wasn't the pay that kept Ditko at Charlton; it was the artistic freedom. Little attention was paid to the editorial content within the covers of their comics as long as the books remained above a particular profit line (if they didn't, they were axed without a second thought, and generally morphed into a newly-titled comic that retained the same numbering as the old title). The reason why the

comics garnered so little attention was because they were considered "fillers" in the overall workings of the umbrella company, Charlton Press. Like Martin Goodman's Marvel Comics, Charlton didn't start out as a comic-book publisher (song books and magazines was their bread and butter) and their motive for publishing comic books was far more functional than Goodman's.

Unlike all the New York publishers, Charlton housed *all* of its operation in its property in Derby, Connecticut, including its own printing presses. They had only a satellite office in Manhattan where an editor or runner met with artists to exchange work and payment. Charlton Business Manager Ed Konick, who started working for the company in 1952, once said, "We had to keep the presses running around the clock because when you have everything under one roof, idle presses cost you a fortune. You have to keep putting product out, so it was to our benefit to keep operating as much as possible."

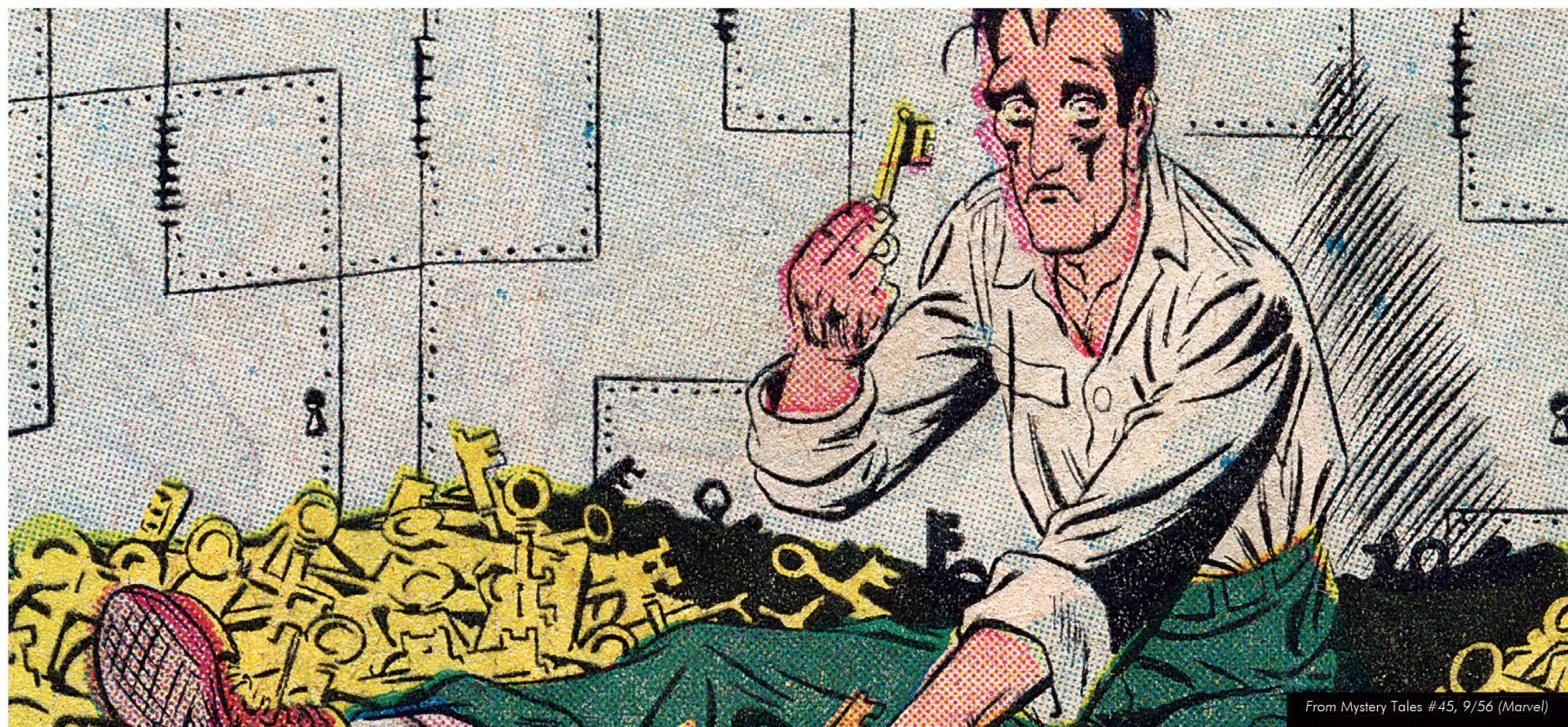
Dick Giordano shared a different opinion in his introduction to the *DC Comics Action Heroes Archives* v2 (2007). He started working for Charlton in 1952 as an artist, then as an editor in the mid-1960s, and while not denying that comics were essentially fillers, he questioned Konick's assertion: "The comics' higher print runs made it possible to

reduce the cost of printing and distributing Charlton's other publications. In short, they [the comics] 'made' money by saving it."

And those printing presses provided Ditko with a great deal of volume in 1957. He needed it, churning out work at \$6.50 for a page of finished art (pencils and inking). Ditko had only produced 67 pages for Marvel in 1956, but his output at Charlton soared in 1957 to over 450 pages (almost two full comics a month by today's standards). This allowed him to experiment with different styles and different genres, and that developmental arc is on display in this volume.

Much like Ayn Rand's architect, Howard Roark, in her novel *The Fountainhead*, Ditko's desire for financial gain never trumped his desire to produce artwork unfiltered by others from concept to the printed page. "I like to receive money for my work. But I can pass that up this time. I like to have people know my work is done by me. But I can pass that up...The only thing that matters, my goal, my reward, my beginning, my end is the work itself. My work done my way." Sounds like a quote from Steve Ditko, but is, in fact, Roark's professional manifesto to his rival Peter Keating in Rand's Objectivist tome.

A key effect of Charlton's lack of centralized editorial oversight in their comics division was how their multi-story genre books were put together...



From *Mystery Tales* #45, 9/56 (Marvel)



or “slapped together” is perhaps the most appropriate description. If you were an artist precious enough about your work to see it leave your pen and end up in a child’s hands a few months later, you were in for a big surprise at Charlton Comics.

Nicola “Nick” Cuti was an editor in the 1970s at Charlton, but he describes the utterly random method by which Charlton collated their books that lasted from the company’s inception in the mid-1940s until its death in the mid-1980s: “We would assign stories and some of them were eight pages, some ten, some 15. And they would go out to the artists, we’d get the stories back and then we’d stack them up on the shelves. When we had to put together a magazine...we’d get three stories and we’d find ourselves a page or two pages short... so that was the reason for a lot of those single- and two-page stories.”

In the 1950s, trying to follow an artist’s development arc could be interrupted because stories by one such as Steve Ditko could sit for well over a year before being grabbed off that shelf and tossed between a couple of covers. Hence, to truly trace Ditko’s progress as an artist, the order of the stories in this volume has been chosen not by the chronological publication date, but by when Ditko actually drew them.

This can be determined because comic-book companies used a “job number” (generally documented in the first panel of a story’s first page) to track what they’d given out and what was paid to whom. Within this volume, the earliest job numbers from Ditko’s time at Charlton have been ordered as such, versus publication date. This reveals that Ditko’s second and third stories done during this era — “Adrift In Space” (from *Mysteries Of Unexplored Worlds* #8, Jun ‘58, job #s1211) and “The King Of Planetoid X” (from *Mysteries Of Unexplored Worlds* #7, Feb ‘58, job #s1282) — were published a year or more after his fourth — “The Gloomy One” (from *Strange Suspense Stories* #31, Feb ‘57, job #s1283). Were this volume to publish strictly by the books’ publication dates, the clash of styles would be dramatic.

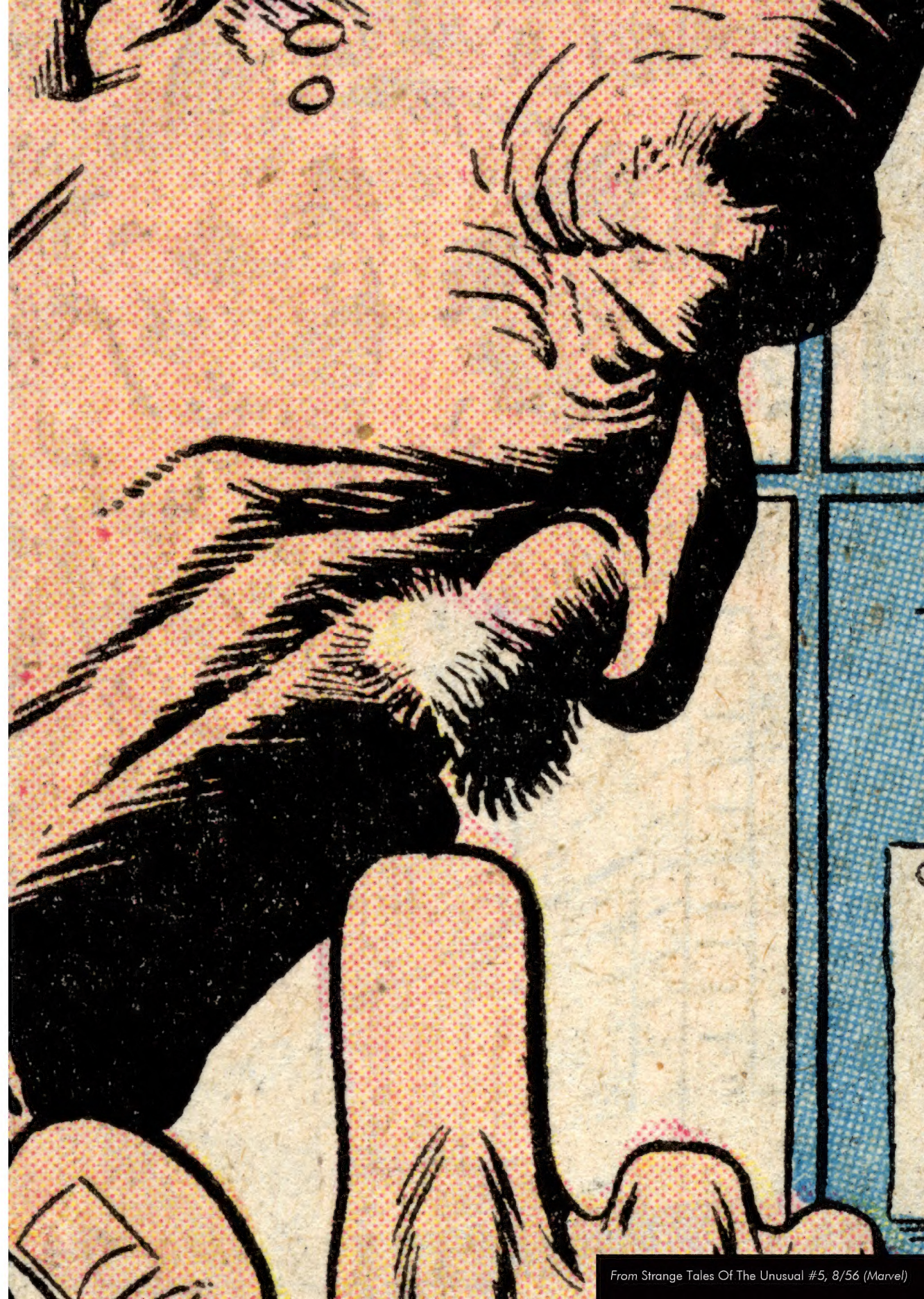
And that would be a shame because there weren’t too many periods during Ditko’s career that he made more of a stylistic leap. While no longer able to “pour on the gore” like he had done in the Pre-Code era, the dramatic strides he made in the quality of his work represents the true value of this volume. The pacing of his storytelling is far more effective — the reader able to follow the action from one panel to the next with greater ease and clarity — and his work began to lose the early “cluttering” found in most artists who influenced by the EC stylings. In effect, Ditko was getting more out of a whole lot less.

The lead story in this volume is an oddity itself. With an April 1956 cover date (and no job number), “Starlight Starbright” is from Charlton’s *From Here To Insanity* v3, a slightly oversized comic featuring black-and-white stories that perhaps represented their attempt at the *Mad Magazine* demo (*Mad* made the switch to full-sized magazine format the year before). The story’s outlandishly exaggerated caricatures serve as a strong reminder of Ditko’s versatility. While most famous for his ability to capture melancholy, in characters such as Peter Parker, had Ditko chosen to focus his energies elsewhere, he would have been one of the top humor artists of his generation.

As Marvel continues to mine its 1950s anthology material in its line of Marvel Masterworks collections, the two (not yet collected) Marvel stories reprinted in this volume were selected because they are perfect bookends for Ditko’s progress as an artist even during his short time at Marvel in 1956. “They’ll Be Some Changes Made” from *Journey Into Mystery* #33 (Apr ‘56) — his first story for Marvel — shows remnants of his 1954 trappings (e.g. an ornate splash panel, designed to showcase the environment and the lead character’s place within). All of his 17 stories for Marvel were only four pages in length, no doubt leading the artist to render a great deal of visual information with every opportunity.

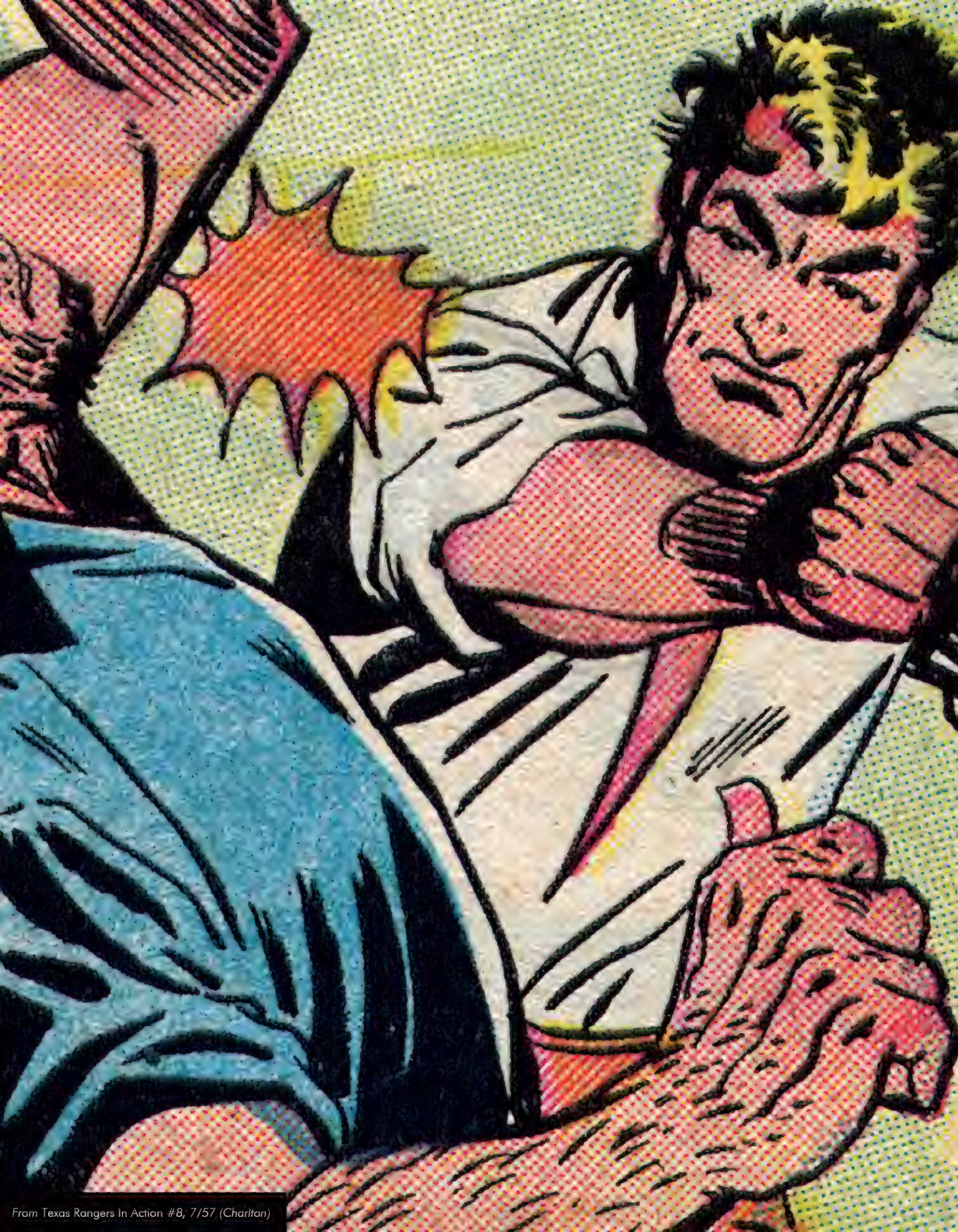
But by “Those Who Vanish” (seen in this volume on page 28) from *Journey Into Mystery* #38 (Sep ‘56) — his eleventh story for Marvel — Ditko was showing signs of mastering how to set up an image for maximum impact, as well as how to pull the reader along from panel to panel more fluidly. Instead of a focus on atmospheric details, he jolted the reader’s eye within the first panel by focusing on the uniqueness of the characters that drove the story. The opening shot of the wise old Indian and the crevasse-like face of the hardened criminal speaks volumes about what the reader needs to know about these characters. The rocks and the cactus are the two simple design elements in the background required by the reader to identify the environment. Framing the Indian character between two tall mountains in an empty sky emphasizes his imposing figure; the billowing robes cloaking the criminal also highlight the Indian figure’s leanness.

The remaining stories Ditko did for Marvel also followed the visual motif Ditko used in this page’s design. The “splash” of the strong lead panel is followed by a smaller second panel that pulls back far enough to establish a location. Ditko would then move into a close-up of the lead characters interacting and that would drive the narrative to the next page. Ditko was developing a signature visual identity in his use of single design elements, spa-



From *Strange Tales Of The Unusual* #5, 8/56 (Marvel)





From Texas Rangers In Action #8, 7/57, (Charlton)

tial interaction of objects, negative space and spotting of blacks.

His work in 1957 also marked a trend towards rendering his characters with such a variety of unique facial characteristics. Others relied on a stock set of men and women, but Ditko was different from the usual Manhattan artist. He instead imbued his narratives with an Eastern European flavor through the use of ethnic and humanistic facial features, clothing, hair and builds. His portrayal of the down-trodden and weathered — the hobos found in “Forever and Ever” from *Strange Suspense Stories* #33 (Aug ‘57) — also lent an emotional quotient not found in the work of his contemporaries.

Other classic Ditko motifs were beginning to take form during this crucial time in his career. His Charlton work became even more expressive, showing mastery at conveying action and emotion through the nuances of the human body. How Ditko used a character’s hands to create space in a panel, to implicitly state the subject’s emotional state, and to express intent, all see their fullest expression being developed in these stories. Heads bowed, slumped shoulders, characters’ stances all spoke louder about a character’s state of mind than any words could provide.

Ditko’s emphasis on the eyes as the windows of a character’s soul also takes firm route here. A close-up of an eyeball in half a panel helped to create not only depth in a panel, but was also used by Ditko to create a sense of dread and paranoia, adding to Ditko’s growing lexicon of human expression. Both motifs are brought to bear in the dark tale of greed and blackmail in “My Secret” from *Out Of This World* #3 (Mar ‘57).

Ditko’s signature ability to craft other dimensions (that culminated in his run on *Dr. Strange* in the mid-1960s) began to flourish during this era. In “A World Of His Own” from *Strange Suspense Stories* #32 (May ‘57), a rich man’s chauffeur discovers that he can step into a painted canvas that reveals a brand new dimension with seemingly endless riches, but the price paid for his folly is higher than any diamonds he finds. Ditko also started to show signs of how he would later stage superhero fisticuffs in *Spider-Man* — motifs like the all-powerful knockout punch that looked as if it was breaking the opponent’s back, which can be seen here in “The Conquered Earth” from *Out Of This World* #4 (Jun ‘57). We are even introduced to a prototype for the idea of Ga-

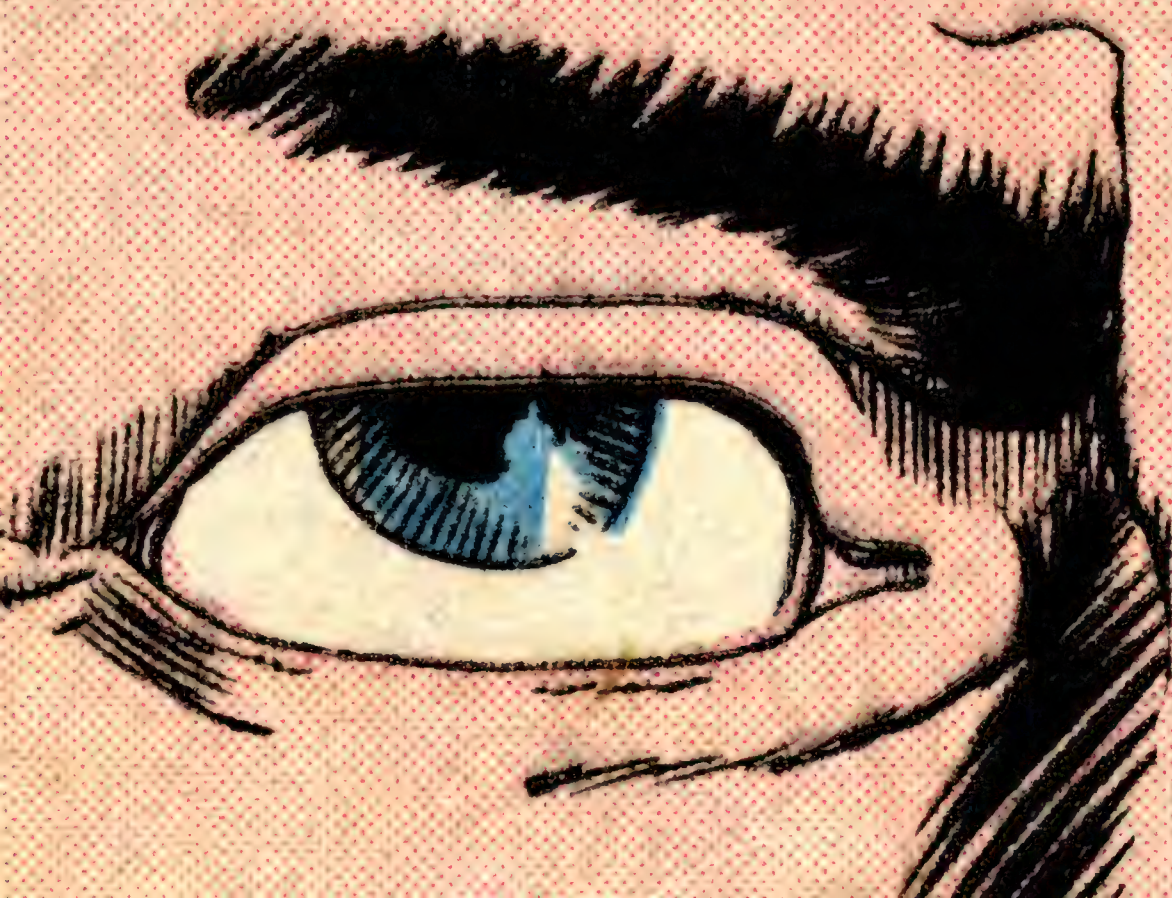
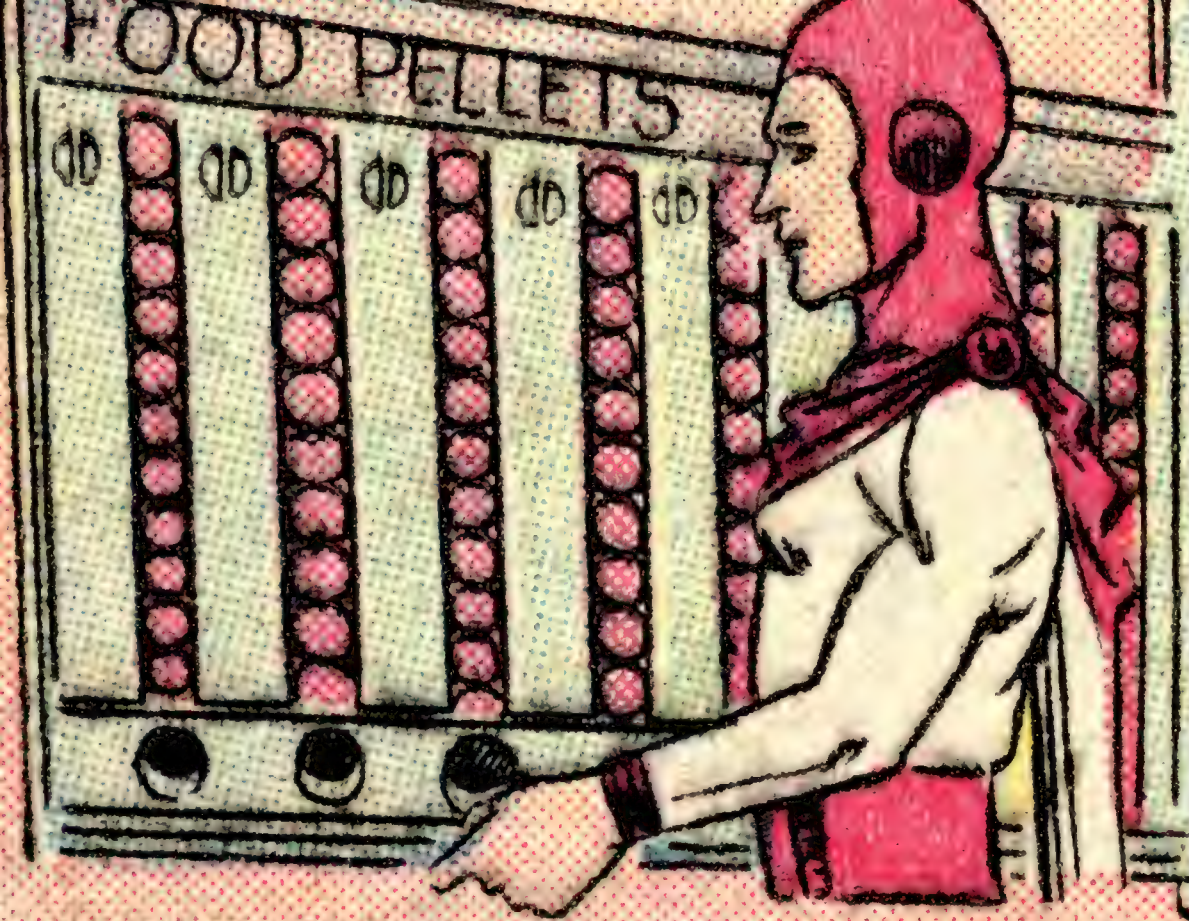
lactus — the Jack Kirby creation for the *Fantastic Four* comic almost a decade later — in “Mystery Planet” from *Strange Suspense Stories* #36 (May ‘58). The story tells of a planet-eating race of aliens that terrorize civilizations in a ship not dissimilar to what Kirby used to spirit Galactus and his voracious appetite across the universe.

The use of liquid blacks in this volume’s work bares the strong influence of Eisner and Wood. On display is Ditko’s strength in creating the ethereal nature of space, in creating dark and foreboding atmospherics, and in framing a character in a panel. This truly took form in comics like *Tales Of The Mysterious Traveler* (based on the 1950s radio show). In page two of “Escape” from *Tales Of The Mysterious Traveler* #4 (Aug ‘57), all of Ditko’s motifs come together — the foreboding tone manifests from the close-up of the Traveler’s eye. Next, a long shot from above reveals the viewpoint of the figures in the next scene before we even see them. The scene pulls back to show the helpless Traveler who can only watch. The attack on the Indian commences, the vantage point moving in back of the Indian’s hat to set up both the last panel and the amount of space in the scene — the marauding antagonists blown out of the panel right at the reader. Would words have added to the narrative being illustrated? Ditko’s stories could often function as silent movies, so strong was his sequential movement from panel to panel.

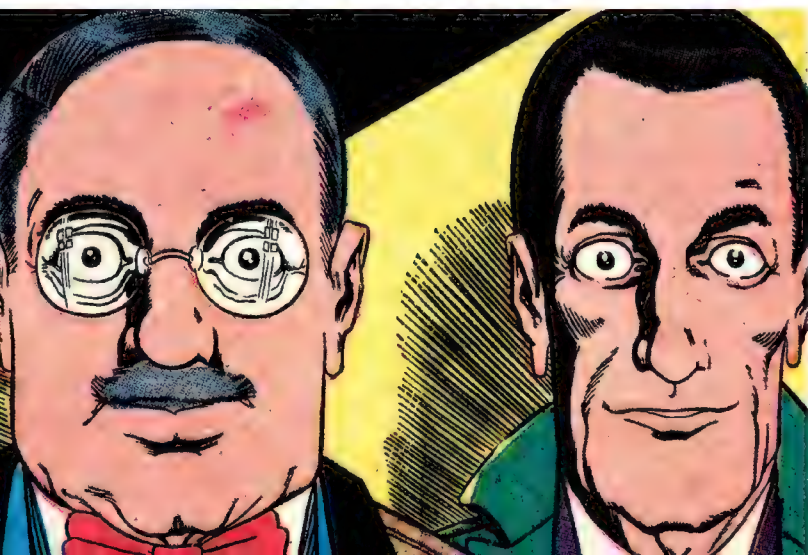
All of the above examples highlight the lack of limitations in Ditko’s imagination, especially given the blandness of many of the scripts handed to him at Charlton. Often, the stories lacked even the “Twilight Zone” twist endings that Ditko and Stan Lee became famous for in the early 1960s. There are more than a few examples of the writer appearing to have simply given up by page five. At times, some of the plots seem to just stop without a logical ending, as if the writer ran out of typing paper.

But this is what made Ditko such a noteworthy artist — the dichotomy between what he was given and what he was able to accomplish. The 200+ pages of his 1957 Charlton material represented here is just the starting point of Ditko’s cache at the company. With almost 500 pages produced in 1957 alone, and almost 450 the following year, this volume merely begins the journey to unexplored words and unusual tales rendered by one of the pre-eminent and unique artistic voices the industry has ever seen. UNEXPLORED WORLDS









Clockwise from opposite, top: From Marvel Tales #147, 6/56 (Marvel), from World Of Mystery #6, 4/57 (Marvel), from World Of Mystery #3, 10/56 (Marvel)



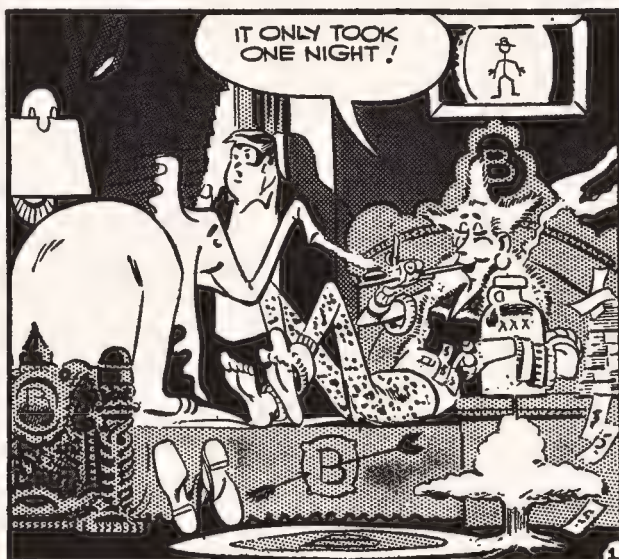
**COMES NOW SLICK BIOGRAPHY TIME. A SLICK BIOGRAPHY IS LIABLE TO TURN UP ALMOST ANYWHERE: MOSTLY IN THE BACK OF PROGRAMS, MOVIE MAGAZINES, AND IN INTERVIEWS IN THE PAPERS. HOWEVER, BEHIND THE NEAT STORY THAT YOU READ ON THE PAGE OFTEN LIES A SERIES OF SORDID EVENTS AND TWISTED CONNIVINGS. LIKE FOR INSTANCE...**

# STARLIGHT ★ StARBright

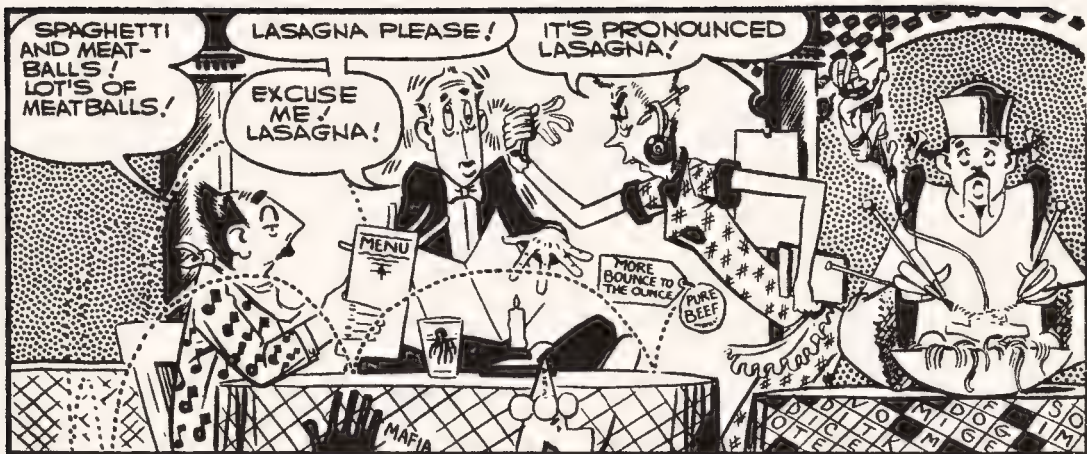
Miss Beverly Kalfin, charming star of Roget and Messerschmann's new Broadway musical, "Chopped Liver" is a petite blonde warbler who hails from Des Moines, Iowa. Petite and unaffected are the words for blonde Beverly.



Petite Beverly (who is also unaffected) remains unspoiled by her new fame and fortune, and sticks to the same homey routine that she had back in Des Moines. She says that she thinks nothing of her overnight success.







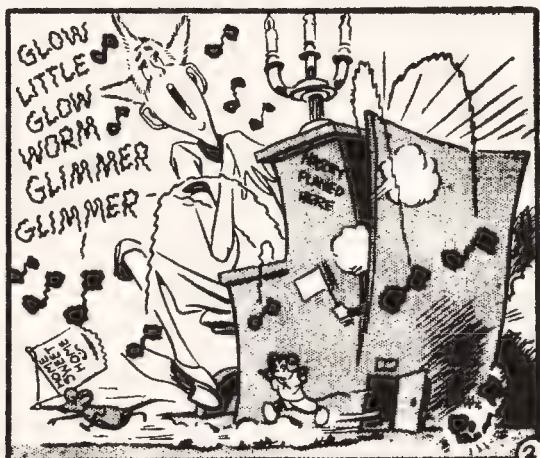
Beverly was discovered by the two producers in a small Italian restaurant where she worked as a waitress. Both Roget and Messerschmann were struck at once with Miss Kalfin's even then apparent petiteness and unaffectedness.



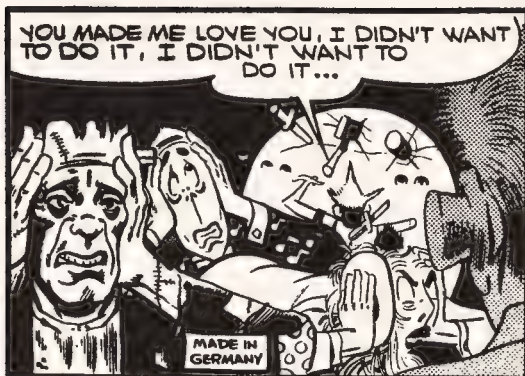
Beverly's fearless originality was in evidence even in her early waitress days.

On a wild guess, Roget turned to Messerschmann and said: "I bet this girl can sing. She looks to me like just the girl to play Jenny Gestalt in our new musical 'Chopped Liver'."

It took a little coaxing, but soon Beverly smiled her wonderful smile, and walked over to the little piano.



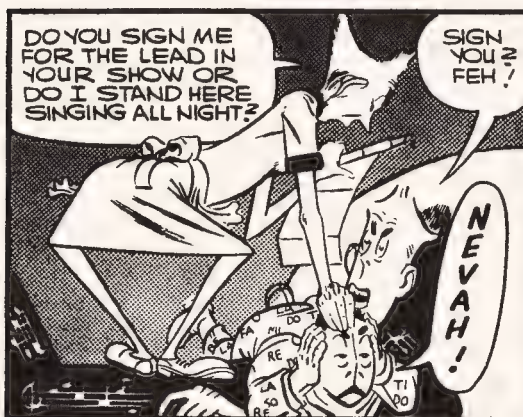




Yes, soon the shy damsel from Des Moines lifted her voice in song. A small voice to be sure and one that could hardly be heard from the tiny Italian restaurant, but a voice of such purity of tone that it brought a hush over the room.



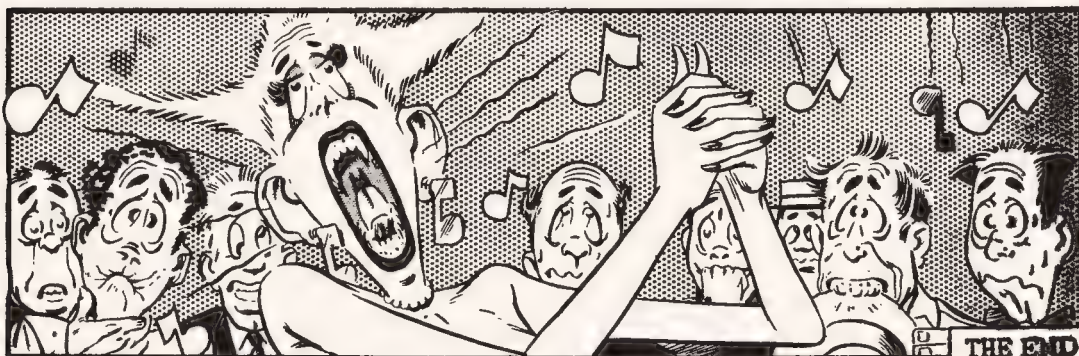
The little restaurant seemed transformed into a grand concert hall as Beverly's petite and unaffected little voice trilled sweetly and sure, leaving no one unmoved.



Thrilled by the quality of her performance, Roget and Messerschmann talked Beverly into starring in "Chopped Liver" their petite and unaffected new musical.



At length Beverly agreed to play the part of Jenny Gestalt, the petite and unaffected heroine of "Chopped Liver" and the most sought after role since "Harvey".



And so the idol of millions who see her nightly as the wholesome star of "Chopped Liver" (and also those who sneak down to Coney Island after the show to watch her do her famous moonlight strip), Beverly Kalfin goes on in her simple ways, a living tribute to the American girl. Yes, simple and unassuming, petite and unaffected are the words for this silver-throated thrush.

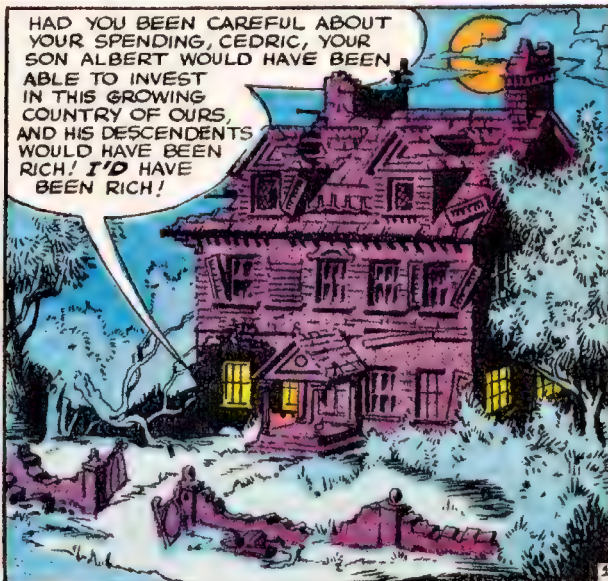
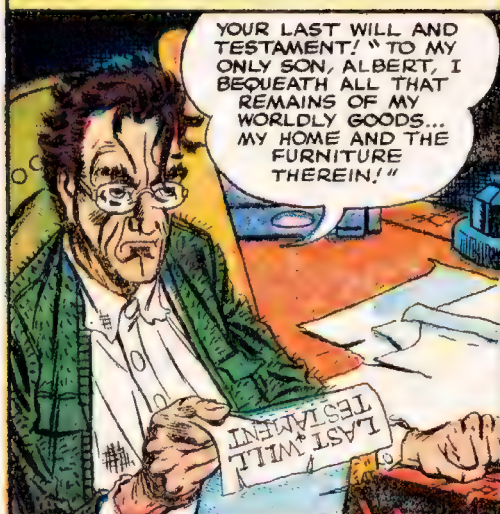


PAUL HAINES SOUGHT TO CHANGE HIS FORTUNE ON A MERE PUSH OF A BUTTON, BUT TO HIS CHAGRIN HE LEARNED THAT THE RESULTS OF *ANY* CHANGES ARE UNPREDICTABLE!

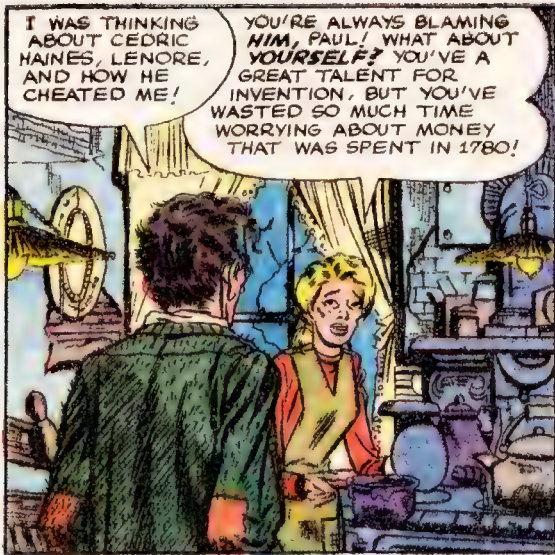
# THERE'LL BE SOME CHANGES MADE



IT WAS QUITE TRUE THAT PAUL HAINES' ANCESTOR, CEDRIC, WHO HAD BUILT THIS HOUSE IN NEW ENGLAND, WAS A WASTREL...

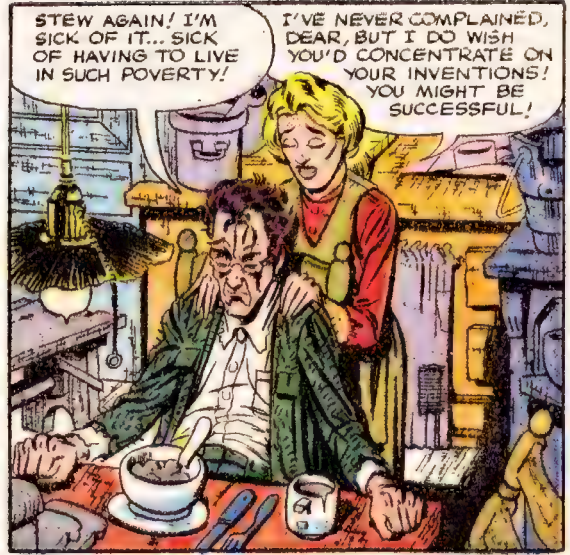






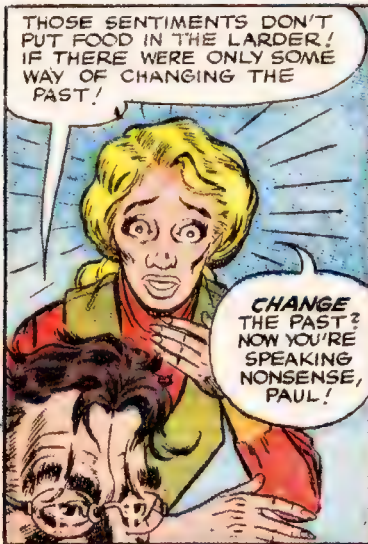
I WAS THINKING ABOUT CEDRIC HAINES, LENORE, AND HOW HE CHEATED ME!

YOU'RE ALWAYS BLAMING HIM, PAUL! WHAT ABOUT **YOURSELF?** YOU'VE A GREAT TALENT FOR INVENTION, BUT YOU'VE WASTED SO MUCH TIME WORRYING ABOUT MONEY THAT WAS SPENT IN 1780!



STEW AGAIN! I'M SICK OF IT... SICK OF HAVING TO LIVE IN SUCH POVERTY!

I'VE NEVER COMPLAINED, DEAR, BUT I DO WISH YOU'D CONCENTRATE ON YOUR INVENTIONS! YOU MIGHT BE SUCCESSFUL!



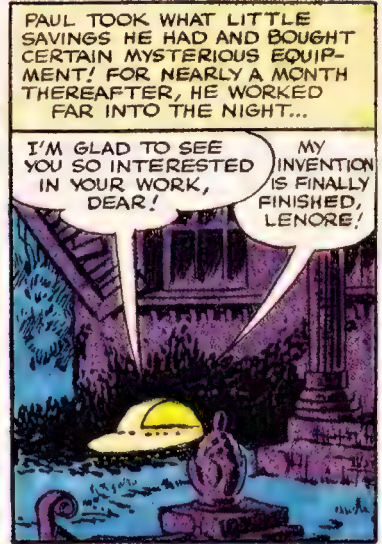
THOSE SENTIMENTS DON'T PUT FOOD IN THE LARDER! IF THERE WERE ONLY SOME WAY OF CHANGING THE PAST!

CHANGE THE PAST? NOW YOU'RE SPEAKING NONSENSE, PAUL!



CHANGE THE PAST! WHY HAVEN'T I THOUGHT OF THIS BEFORE? IT **CAN** BE DONE!

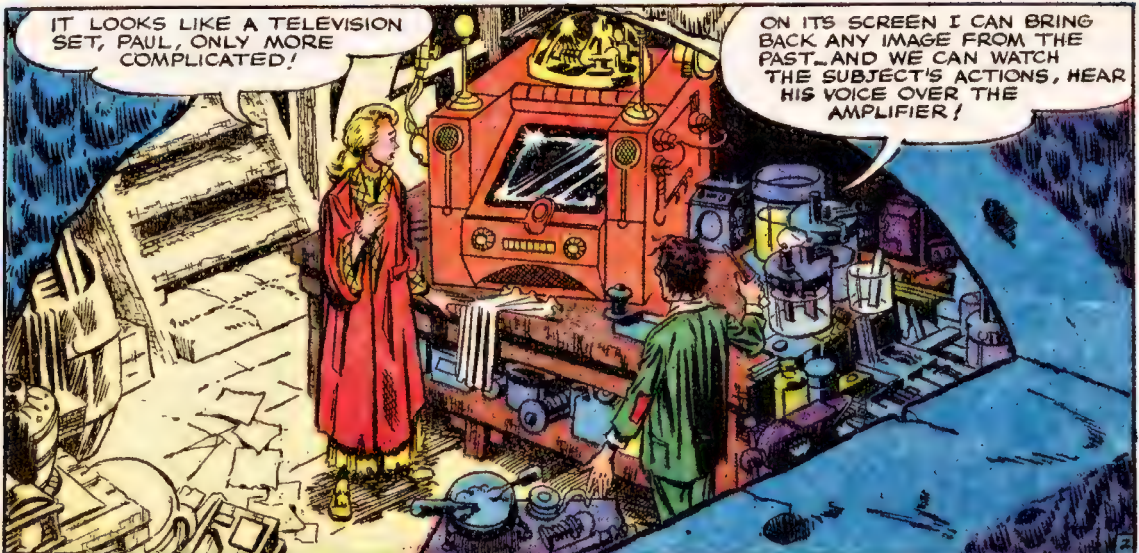
PAUL, EAT YOUR DINNER BEFORE IT GETS COLD!



PAUL TOOK WHAT LITTLE SAVINGS HE HAD AND BOUGHT CERTAIN MYSTERIOUS EQUIPMENT! FOR NEARLY A MONTH THEREAFTER, HE WORKED FAR INTO THE NIGHT...

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU SO INTERESTED IN YOUR WORK, DEAR!

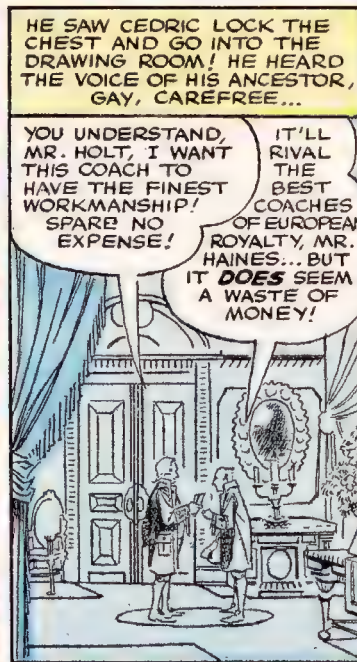
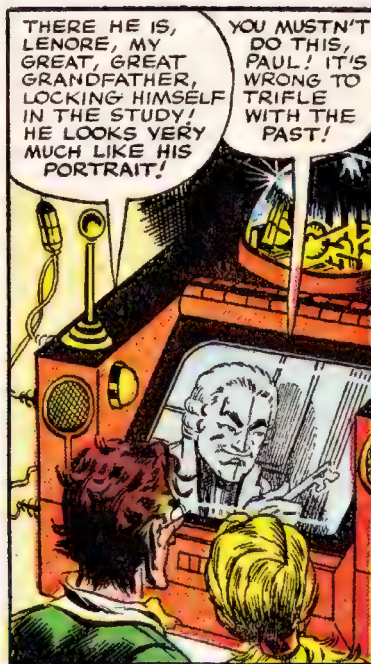
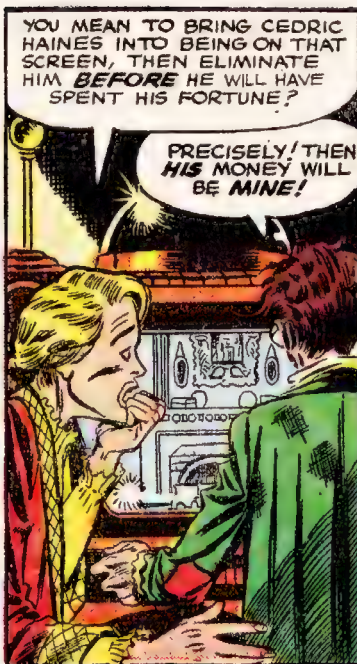
MY INVENTION IS FINALLY FINISHED, LENORE!



IT LOOKS LIKE A TELEVISION SET, PAUL, ONLY MORE COMPLICATED!

ON ITS SCREEN I CAN BRING BACK ANY IMAGE FROM THE PAST... AND WE CAN WATCH THE SUBJECT'S ACTIONS, HEAR HIS VOICE OVER THE AMPLIFIER!



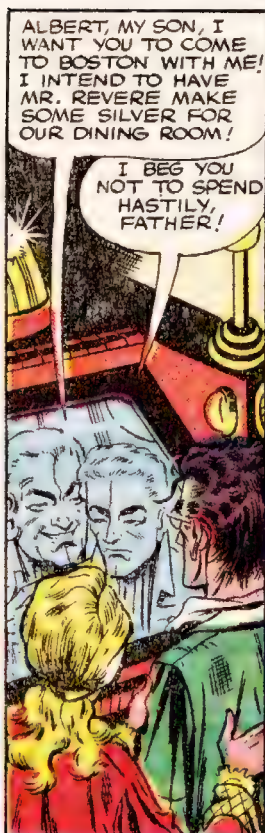






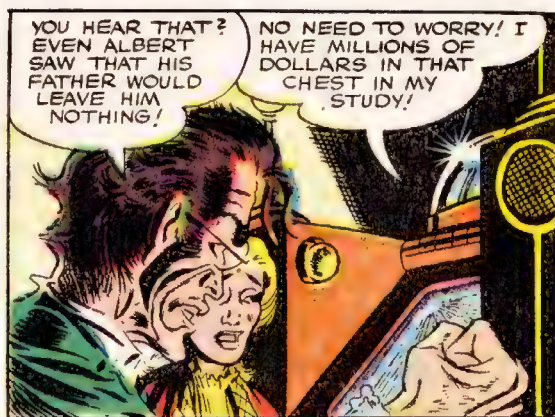
YOU SEE, LENORE, HE WAS TOO SELFISH TO LEAVE ANY MONEY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS!

NEVER-THELESS, PAUL, IT WAS HIS MONEY TO DO WITH AS HE PLEASED! LOOK, HE'S TALKING TO SOMEONE ELSE!



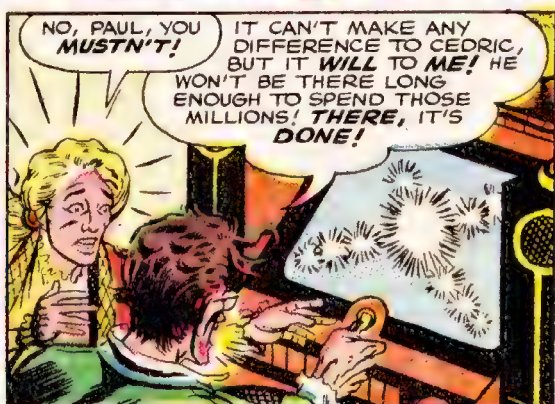
ALBERT, MY SON, I WANT YOU TO COME TO BOSTON WITH ME! I INTEND TO HAVE MR. REVERE MAKE SOME SILVER FOR OUR DINING ROOM!

I BEG YOU NOT TO SPEND HASTILY, FATHER!



YOU HEAR THAT? EVEN ALBERT SAW THAT HIS FATHER WOULD LEAVE HIM NOTHING!

NO NEED TO WORRY! I HAVE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN THAT CHEST IN MY STUDY!



NO, PAUL, YOU MUSTN'T!

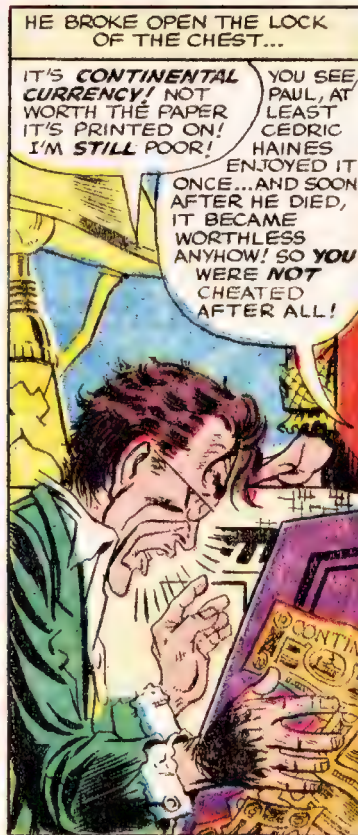
IT CAN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO CEDRIC, BUT IT **WILL** TO ME! HE WON'T BE THERE LONG ENOUGH TO SPEND THOSE MILLIONS! **THERE, IT'S DONE!**



PAUL HAINES RUSHED AT ONCE TO THE STUDY AND TURNED ON THE DESK LAMP!

THE CHEST, LENORE! THE CHEST IS HERE! I'M A RICH MAN!...A MILLIONAIRE!

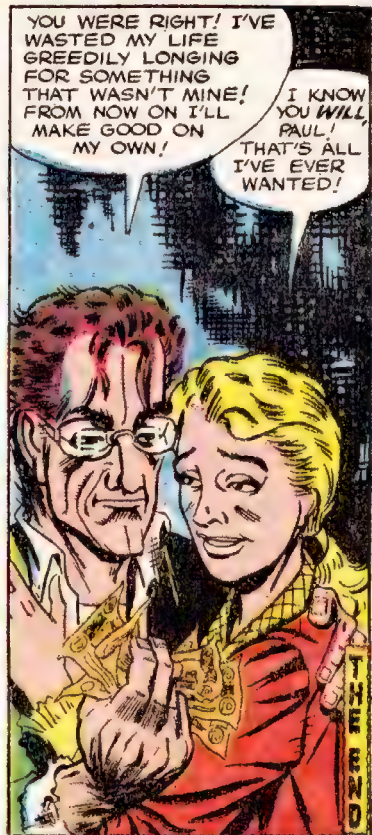
IT ISN'T RIGHT THIS WAY, PAUL!



HE BROKE OPEN THE LOCK OF THE CHEST...

IT'S **CONTINENTAL CURRENCY!** NOT WORTH THE PAPER IT'S PRINTED ON! I'M **STILL** POOR!

YOU SEE, PAUL, AT LEAST CEDRIC HAINES ENJOYED IT ONCE...AND SOON AFTER HE DIED, IT BECAME WORTHLESS ANYHOW! SO **YOU** WERE **NOT** CHEATED AFTER ALL!



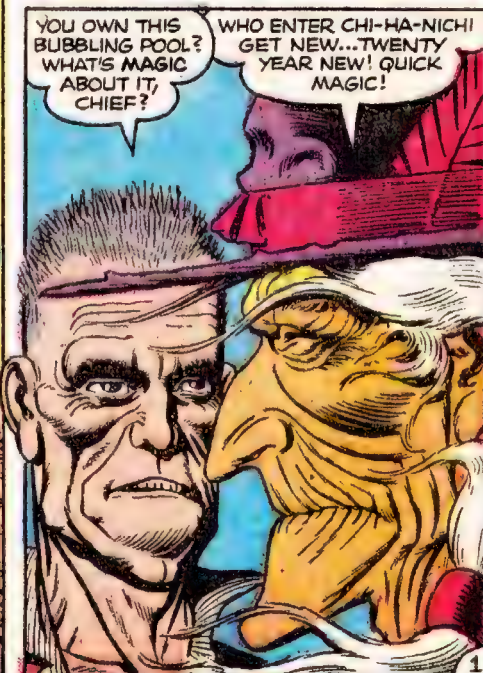
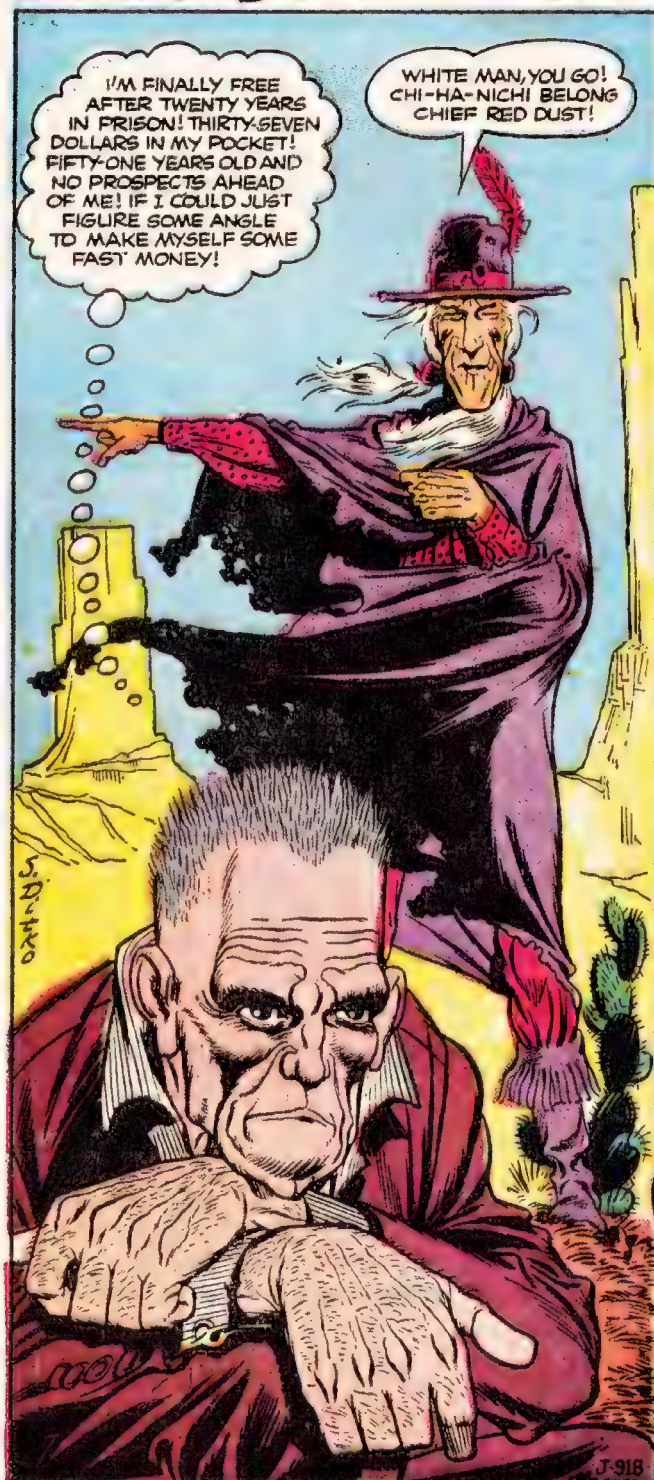
YOU WERE RIGHT! I'VE WASTED MY LIFE GREEDILY LONGING FOR SOMETHING THAT WASN'T MINE! FROM NOW ON I'LL MAKE GOOD ON MY OWN!

I KNOW YOU **WILL**, PAUL! THAT'S ALL I'VE EVER WANTED!

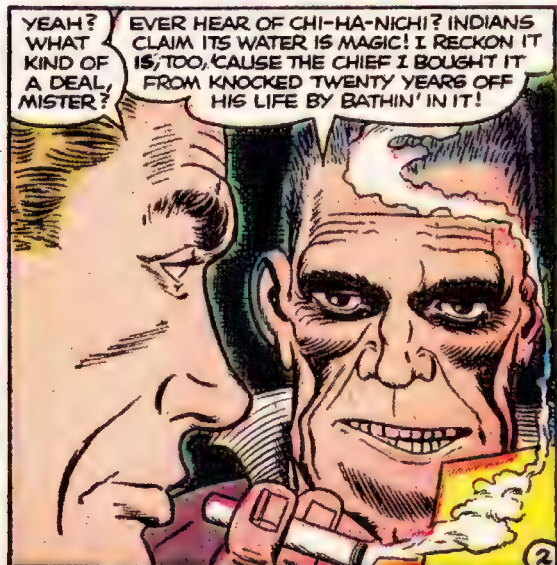
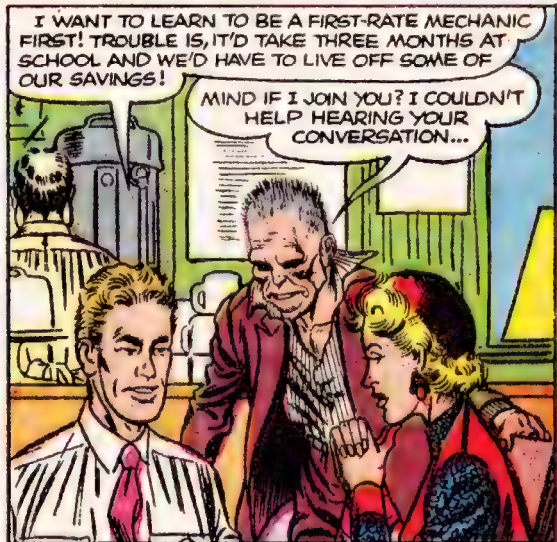
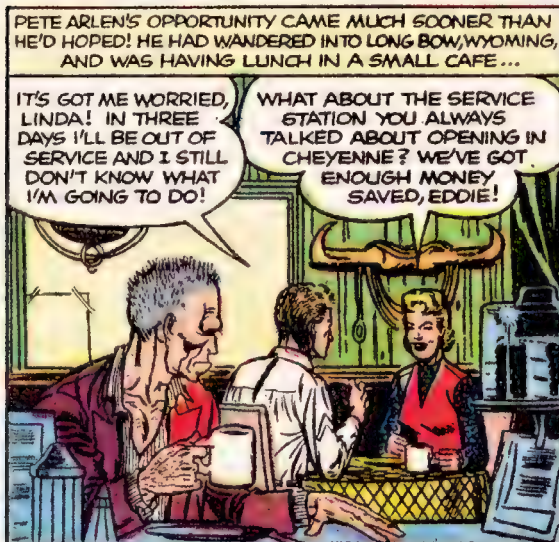


INDIAN LEGEND TOLD OF THE MAGICAL POWER OF CHI-HA-NICHI! AND WHEN AN EVIL MAN BOUGHT THAT STRANGE POOL OF SPARKLING WATER, THE RETURN ON HIS INVESTMENT WAS MORE THAN HE BARGAINED FOR...

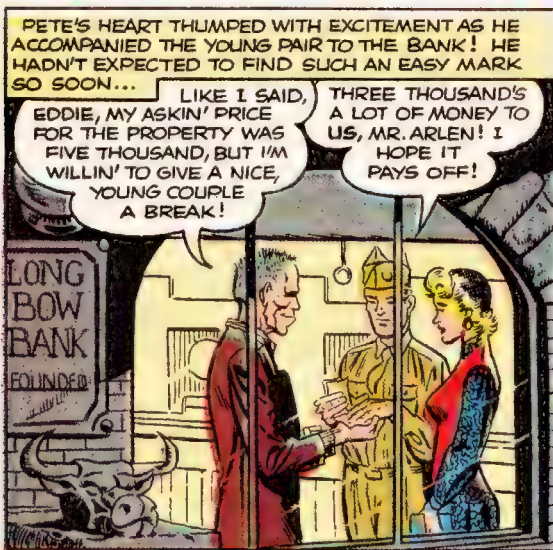
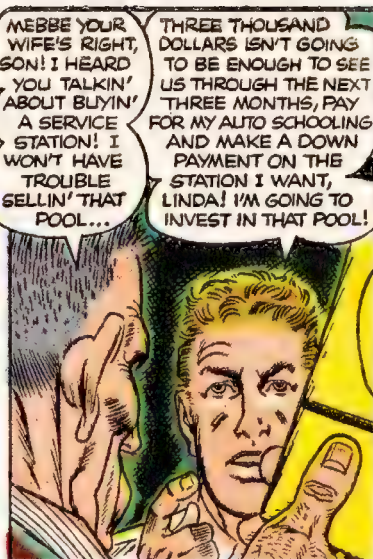
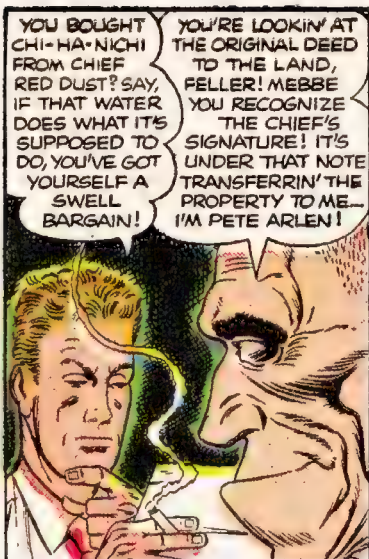
# THOSE WHO VANISH!



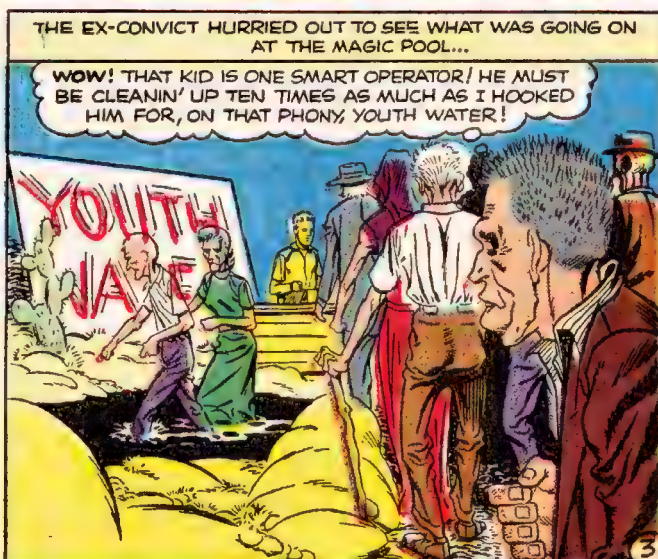








PETE ARLEN WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE LONG BOW A FEW DAYS LATER, WHEN HE HEARD A CONVERSATION THAT BROUGHT HIM UP SHORT...





**PETE GASPED WITH AMAZEMENT AS HE SAW THE OLD COUPLE ENTER THE POOL AND VANISH!**

YOU MEAN TO TELL ME THAT THE WATERS OF CHI-NA-NICHI ACTUALLY MAKES PEOPLE TWENTY YEARS YOUNGER!

IT SURE DOES! YOU NOTICE HOW PEOPLE GO INTO IT AND DISAPPEAR? WELL, I KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT SUCH THINGS! IT HAS TO DO WITH SENDIN' 'EM THROUGH A TIME WARP! AND I'VE SEEN 'EM BACK IN LONG BOW LATER, ACTUALLY LOOKIN' THAT MUCH YOUNGER!

**PETE ARLEN WATCHED THE YOUNG COUPLE CASH IN ON THE MAGIC POOL HE SOLD THEM, UNTIL THE LAST OF THE OLD PEOPLE ENTERED IT AND STARTED TO VANISH!**

IT DOES WORK! WHEN THEY'RE GONE, I'M GOIN' TO TAKE A DIP MYSELF!

BY THE TIME THE RHODES HAD GONE, THERE WAS LITTLE WATER LEFT IN THE POOL, AND EVEN THE SPRING HAD DRIED UP...

IF I CAN GO BACK TWENTY YEARS I'LL BE YOUNG ENOUGH TO REALLY MAKE GOOD AT THE RACKETS! AND THIS TIME I WON'T GET CAUGHT!

AS THE OLD PEOPLE HAD DONE, PETE STARTED TO FADE INTO THE TIME WARP...

MAGIC CHI-HA-NICHI DRIED UP AFTER PETE ARLEN VANISHED! BUT THE WATER HAD SERVED ITS PURPOSE! THERE WERE NO OLD PEOPLE LEFT IN LONG BOW...

EDDIE AND LINDA RHODES HAD MONEY IN THE BANK, AND A FINE NEW HOME! AND EDDIE, A FIRST-RATE MECHANIC, HAD A BETTER SERVICE STATION THAN HE EVER DARED DREAM OF OWNING!

AS FOR PETE ARLEN... WELL, HE WENT BACK 20 YEARS, TOO! WHEN THE WATERS OF CHI-HA-NICHI FULFILLED THEIR PROMISE, PETE STARTED A 20-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE... FOR THAT'S WHAT HE WAS DOING 20 YEARS BEFORE!

**THE END**



# STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

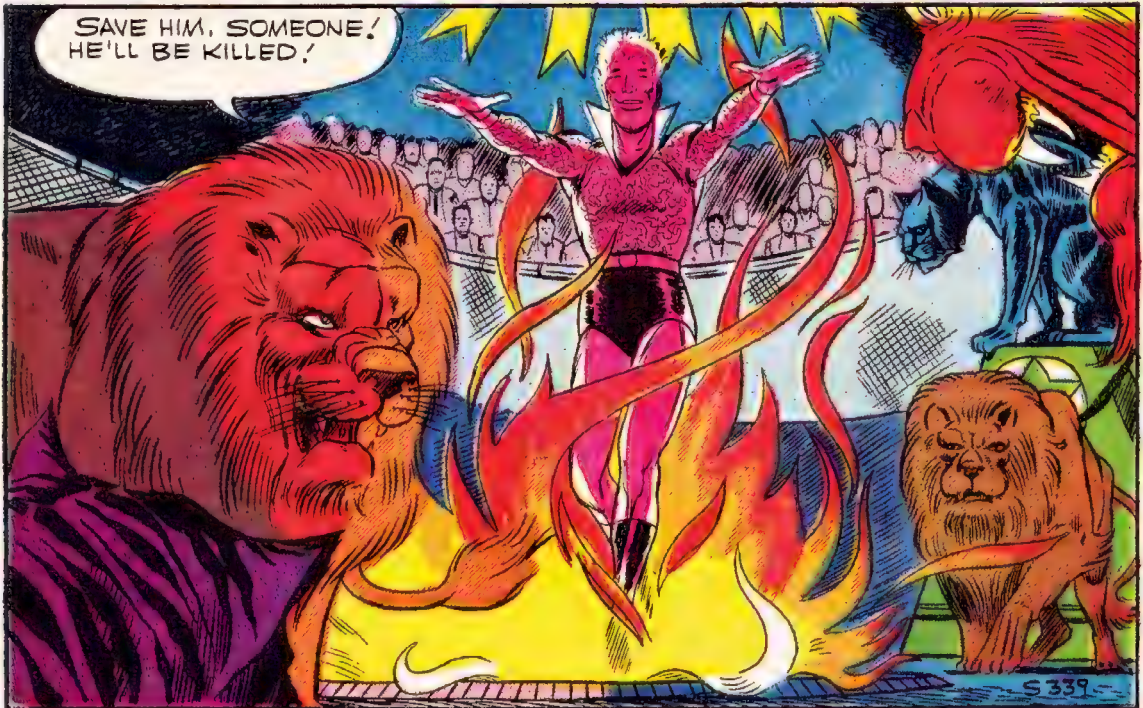


THIS SEAL OF APPROVAL APPEARS ONLY ON COMIC MAGAZINES WHICH HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY REVIEWED, PRIOR TO PUBLICATION, BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY, AND FOUND TO HAVE MET THE HIGH STANDARDS OF MORALITY AND GOOD TASTE REQUIRED BY THE CODE. THE CODE AUTHORITY OPERATES APART FROM ANY INDIVIDUAL PUBLISHER AND EXERCISES INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT WITH RESPECT TO CODE-COMPLIANCE. A COMIC MAGAZINE BEARING ITS SEAL IS YOUR ASSURANCE OF GOOD READING AND PICTORIAL MATTER.

*Alfred I. Fago* Executive Editor

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU KNEW A MAN WHO COULD LIVE FOREVER? WOULD YOU TRY TO FIND OUT WHO HE WAS -- AND WHAT HE WAS? COME ALONG AND SEE FOR YOURSELF WHAT HAPPENED TO ...**

## The MAN WHO COULD NEVER BE KILLED



THE CROWD ROSE TO ITS FEET, SHRIEKING WITH HORROR! BUT...

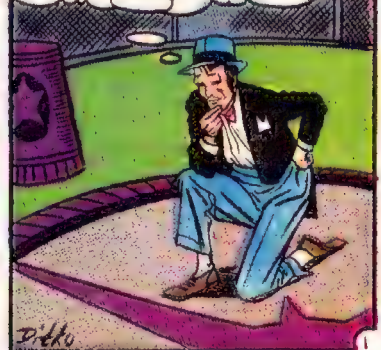
IN THE CROWD WAS TOM BLAKE, A REPORTER FOR THE CITY PAPER...

AFTER THE CROWD LEFT...

THERE YOU ARE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN -- THE INVINCIBLE INVULNERNO! CAN'T BE TOUCHED BY FIRE OR BEAST!

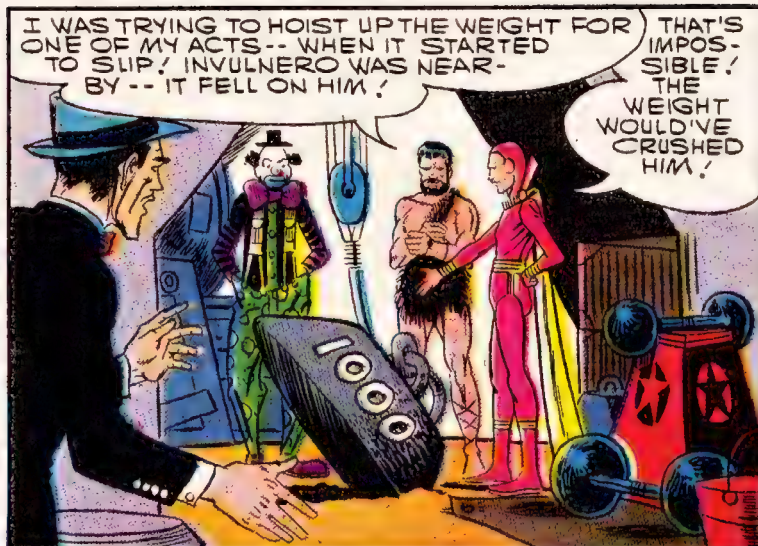
HE'S ALIVE! THAT'S A TERRIFIC TRICK!

HOW DOES HE DO IT? NO ONE HAD TIME TO TAKE ANY MIRRORS AWAY -- OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT! GUESS I'LL ASK HIM MYSELF!

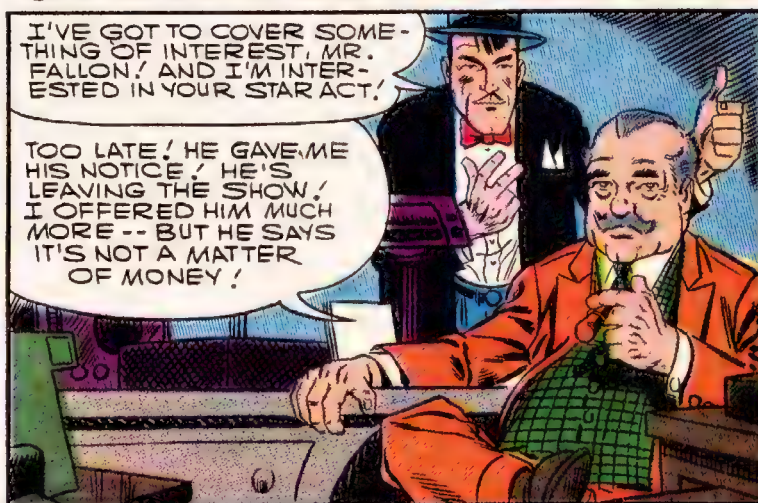




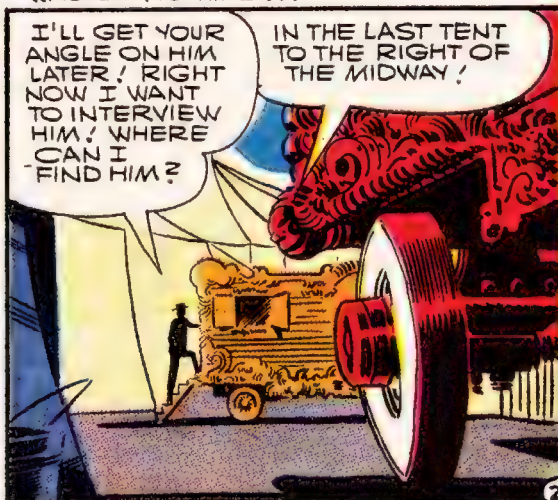
SUDDENLY ...



SO A FEW MINUTES LATER IN THE MANAGER'S OFFICE..



SENSING AN UNUSUAL STORY, BLAKE WASTED NO TIME ...





THE YOUNG REPORTER WAS LUCKY... FOR INSIDE HIS TENT WAS...



INVULNERO -- AND DOZENS OF CIRCUS ANIMALS LYING NEAR HIM!

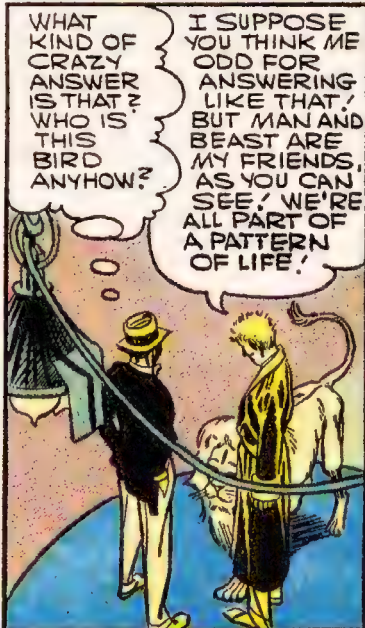
COME IN! THEY WON'T HARM YOU! WHAT IS IT YOU WISH?

BLAKE SOON MADE KNOWN HIS ERRAND...



...SO IF YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF, I'LL WRITE YOU UP!

THERE'S NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT ME! I'M WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL... AN OBSERVER OF LIFE!



WHAT KIND OF CRAZY ANSWER IS THAT? WHO IS THIS BIRD ANYHOW?

I SUPPOSE YOU THINK ME ODD FOR ANSWERING LIKE THAT! BUT MAN AND BEAST ARE MY FRIENDS, AS YOU CAN SEE, WE'RE ALL PART OF A PATTERN OF LIFE!



UH... YES! NOW TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF, MR. INVULNERO!

I'M VERY TIRED, WHY DON'T YOU ASK ME TOMORROW? I HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT APPOINTMENT TO KEEP!



BUT THE MANAGER SAID YOU WERE QUITTING...

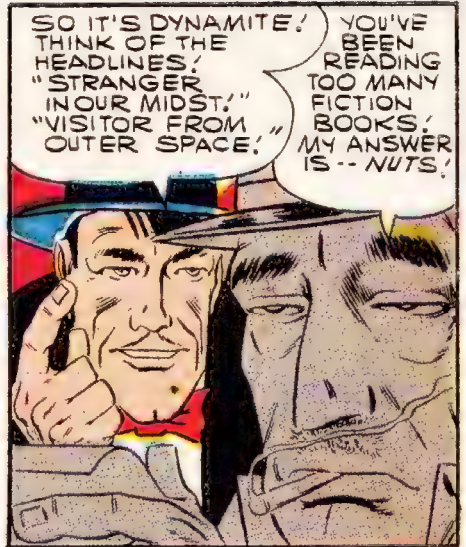
GOOD DAY, MR. BLAKE! I'M SORRY BUT I MUST HURRY!



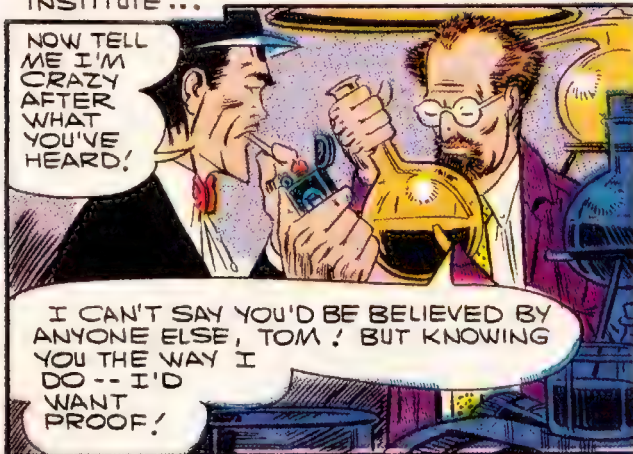
HMPF! BRUSHED OFF! BUT THERE'S SOMETHING MIGHTY PECULIAR ABOUT HIM -- AND I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS!



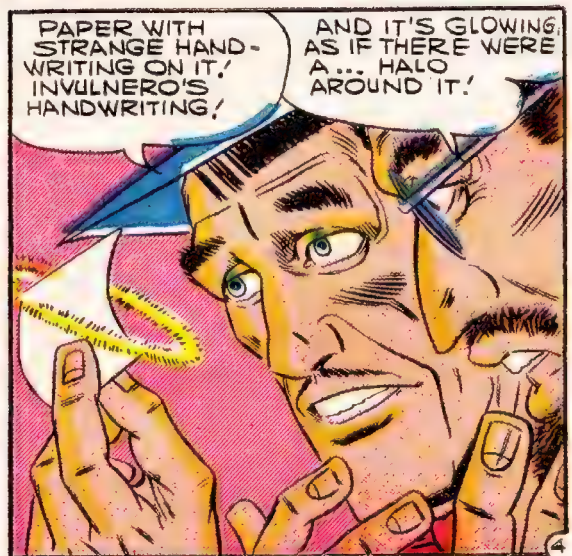
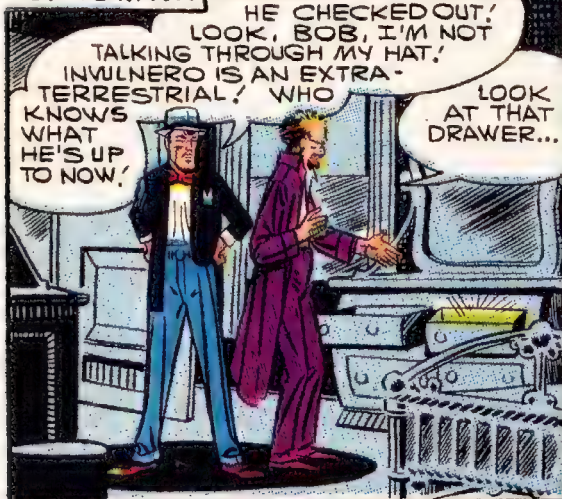
PLAYING A HUNCH, BLAKE SPOKE TO HIS EDITOR..



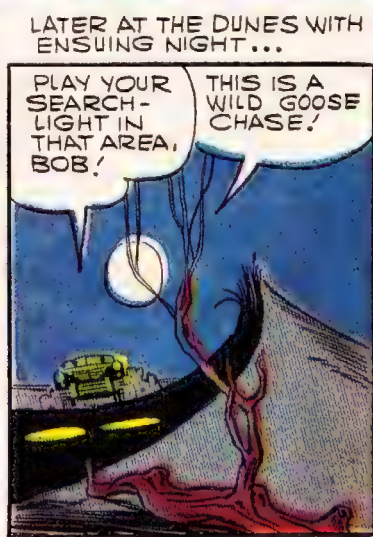
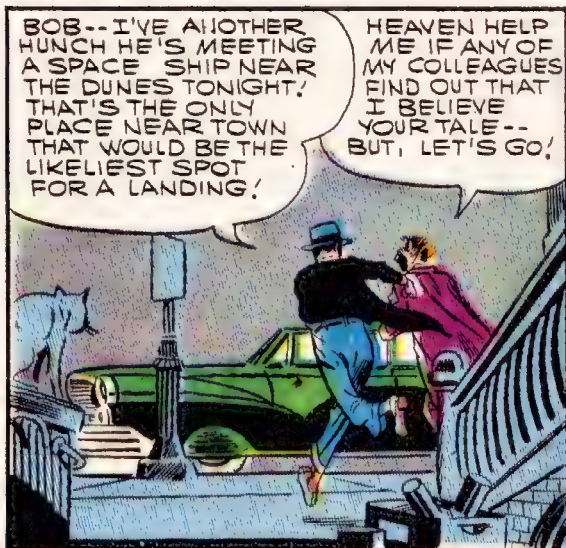
BUT BLAKE WAS DETERMINED TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH. HE CALLED ON A CLOSE FRIEND, DOCTOR PEARSON OF THE SCIENCE INSTITUTE ...



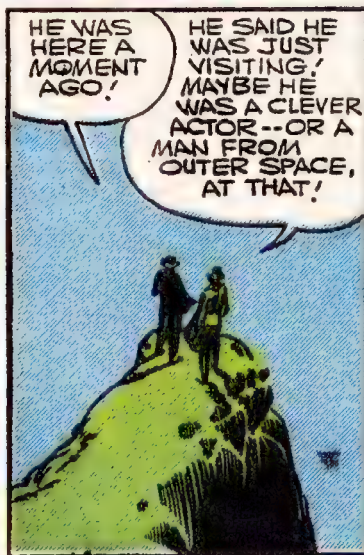
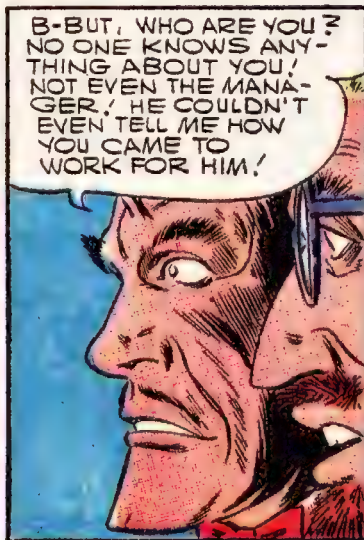
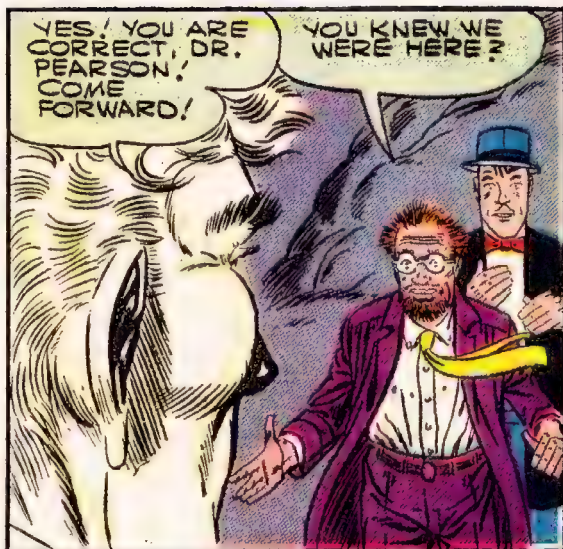
MINUTES LATER, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN...













# ADrift in SPACE

**L**ONELINESS FOR EARTH, FEAR AND RESTLESSNESS HAVE PLAGUED ALL SPACE SHIP COMMANDERS EVER SINCE EARTHLINGS FIRST EMBARKED UPON EXTENSIVE SPACE PATROLS. AND SOMETIMES THE PRESSURE ERUPTS INTO THE GRAVEST PROBLEM OF ANY COMMANDER ... MUTINY!

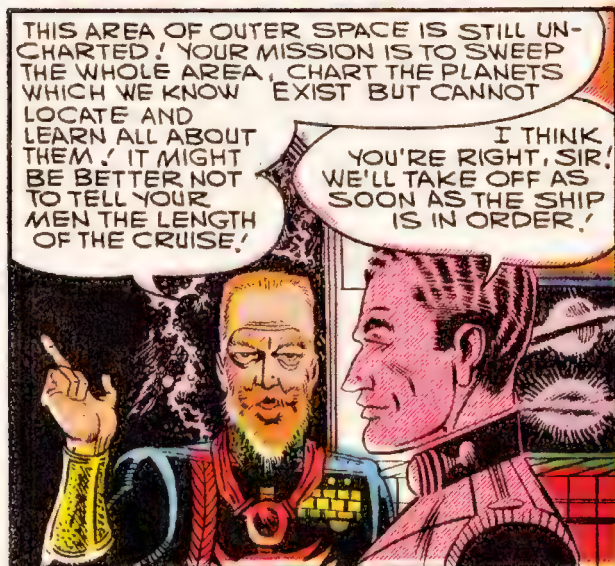
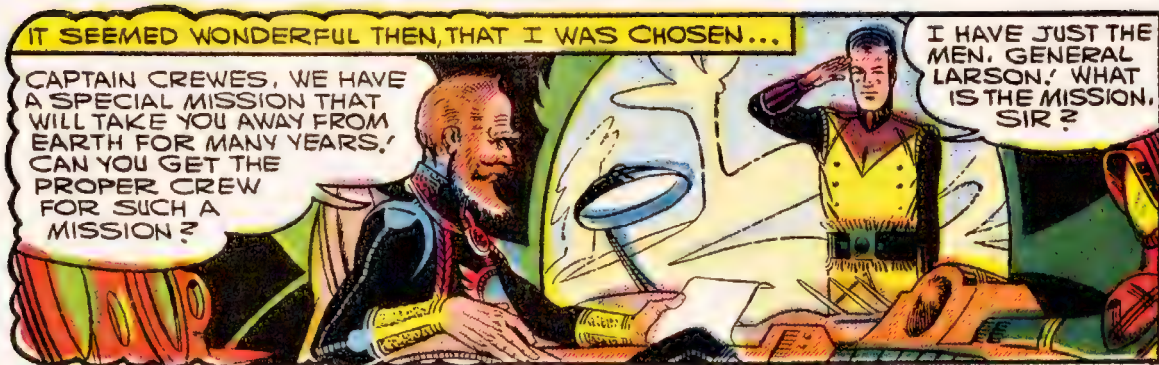
FOR YEARS I HAD BEEN AFRAID OF THIS, AND NOW IT HAD HAPPENED ...



IT WAS ENDED NOW--THE LONG YEAR OF PAINSTAKING, LONELY PATROLLING THAT HAD STARTED SO SIMPLY ...







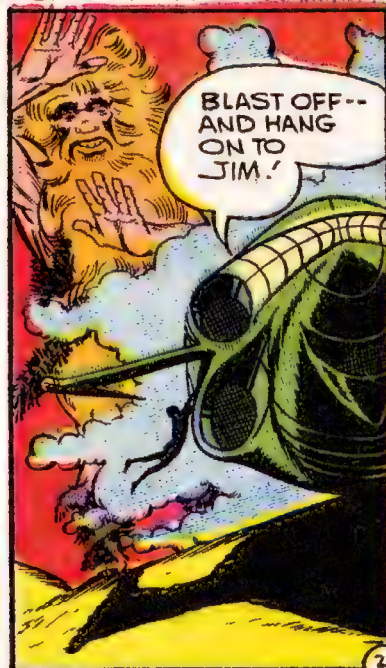
THERE WERE MANY ADVENTURES TO SPICE THE LONELINESS OF THE PATROL...



BUT THIS ONE WASN'T EMPTY! SUDDENLY...

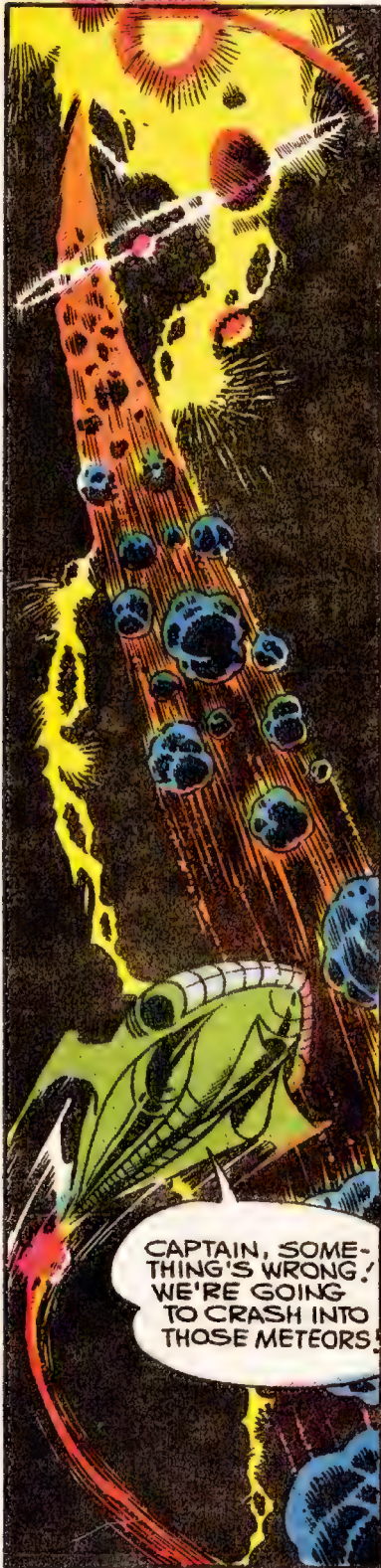


WE BARELY SCRAMBLED BACK IN TIME...





WE HAD TO BE CONSTANTLY ON THE ALERT FROM DANGERS NOT ONLY ON THE OUTSIDE...



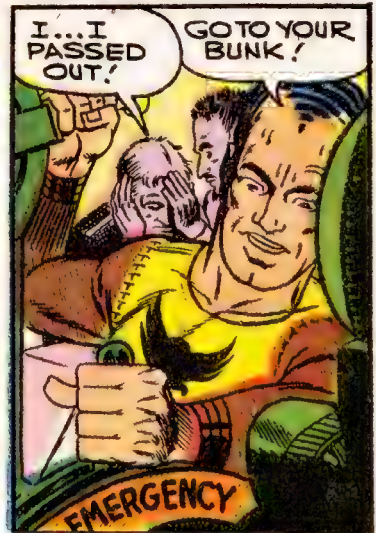
CAPTAIN, SOMETHING'S WRONG! WE'RE GOING TO CRASH INTO THOSE METEORS!

...BUT SOMETIMES WITH-IN OUR OWN RANKS...



FULL ASTERN ALL BLASTER TUBES! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, HELMSMAN?

THIS TIME IT WAS SPACE-SICKNESS THAT STRUCK SO SUDDENLY...



I...I PASSED OUT! GOTO YOUR BUNK!

WHEN I REPORTED MISSION ACCOMPLISHED I WAS SURPRISED BY THE REPLY...

EXTEND PATROL INDEFINITELY! EARTH BECOMING UNINHABITABLE THROUGH ICE-CAP FORMATION! WILL INFORM WHEN AND WHERE YOU SHOULD REPORT!

BETTER NOT TELL THE CREW AND SIMPLY GIVE ORDERS TO SWEEP A NEW SECTOR!



SO I TOLD NO ONE--AND ISSUED NEW ORDERS...

MAP A COURSE THROUGH THAT AREA! WE'LL SPEND A FEW YEARS THERE!

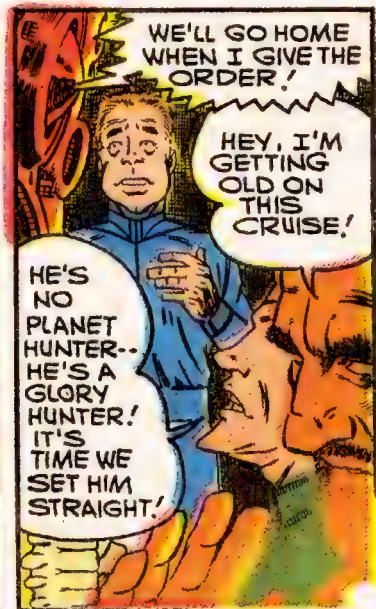
BUT, CAPTAIN, WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO HOME AFTER REACHING HERE!



WE'LL GO HOME WHEN I GIVE THE ORDER!

HEY, I'M GETTING OLD ON THIS CRUISE!

HE'S NO PLANET HUNTER-- HE'S A GLORY HUNTER! IT'S TIME WE SET HIM STRAIGHT!





THE YEARS PASSED AND I STILL COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO TELL THEM ...

I SAY WE'VE GOT TO SET HIM ADRIPT! THEN GO HOME AND SAY HE WAS LOST WHEN HIS GRAVITY BELT FAILED WHILE HE WAS ON A PLANET!

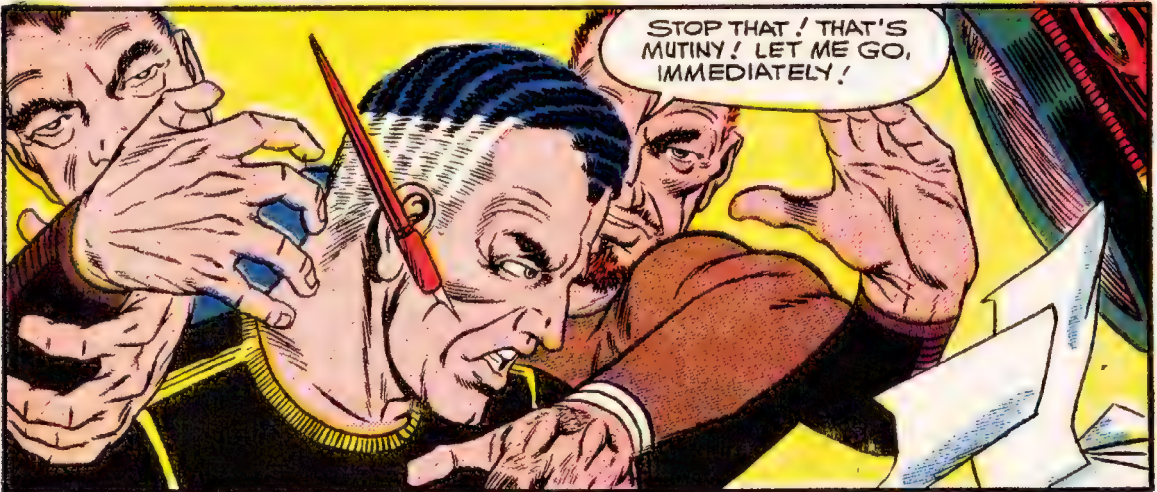
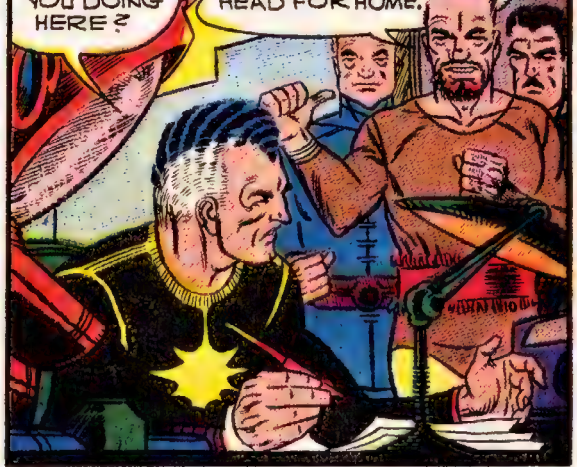
IT'S GETTING SERIOUS! I'LL HAVE TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH! BETTER MAKE SOME NOTES ON THE EASIEST WAY TO TELL THEM!



BUT IT WAS MORE SERIOUS THAN I THOUGHT.

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

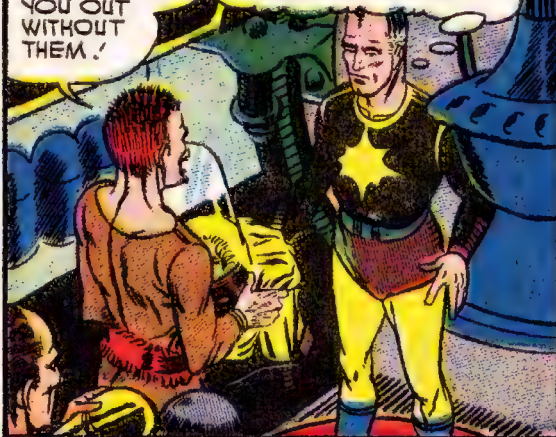
YOU'RE GOING, CAPTAIN! UNLESS YOU TURN THIS SHIP RIGHT NOW AND HEAD FOR HOME!



STOP THAT! THAT'S MUTINY! LET ME GO, IMMEDIATELY!

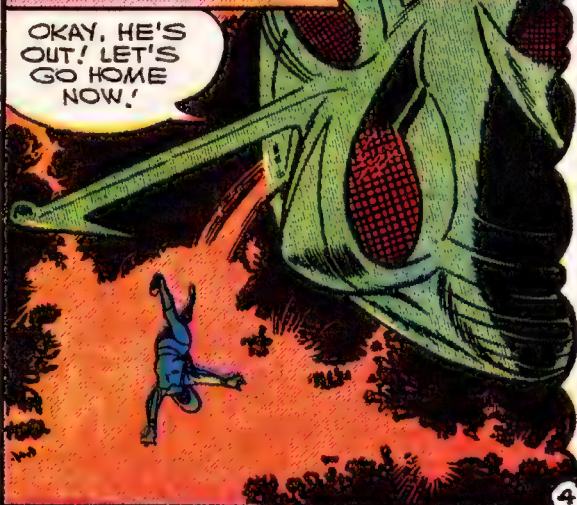
OKAY, SO IT'S MUTINY! NOW CLIMB INTO THESE OR WE'LL SHOVE YOU OUT WITHOUT THEM!

THEY'RE GOING TO SET ME ADRIPT OUT HERE! I CAN'T POSSIBLY GLIDE IN TO AN INHABITED PLANET!



I TRIED TO TELL THEM... BUT THEY WERE BEYOND LISTENING ...

OKAY, HE'S OUT! LET'S GO HOME NOW!

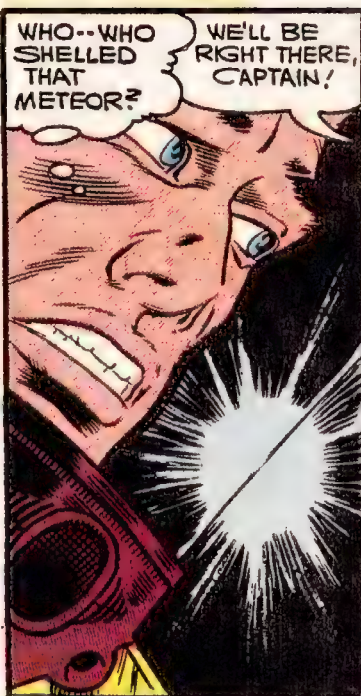






I'M BEYOND  
HOPE NOW...  
WITH THAT  
METEOR  
PACK  
HEADING  
RIGHT  
FOR ME!

BUT SUDDENLY...



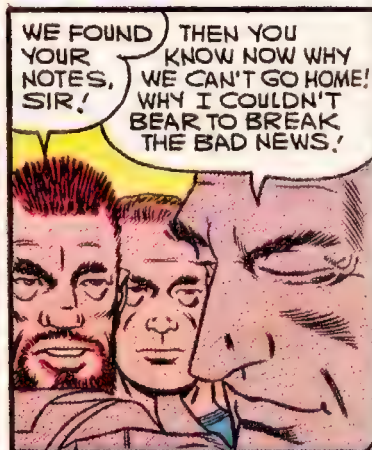
WHO--WHO  
SHELLED  
THAT  
METEOR?

WE'LL BE  
RIGHT THERE,  
CAPTAIN!



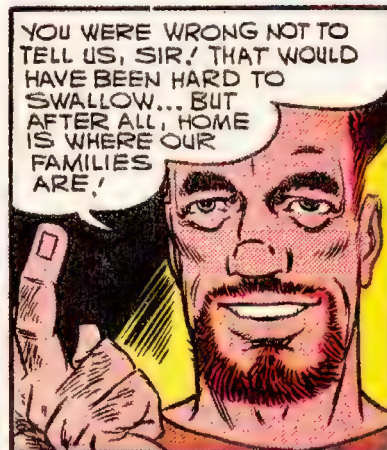
SURE GLAD  
WE GOT  
HERE IN  
TIME, SIR!

SO AM I, BUT  
WHAT MADE  
YOU CHANGE  
YOUR MINDS?

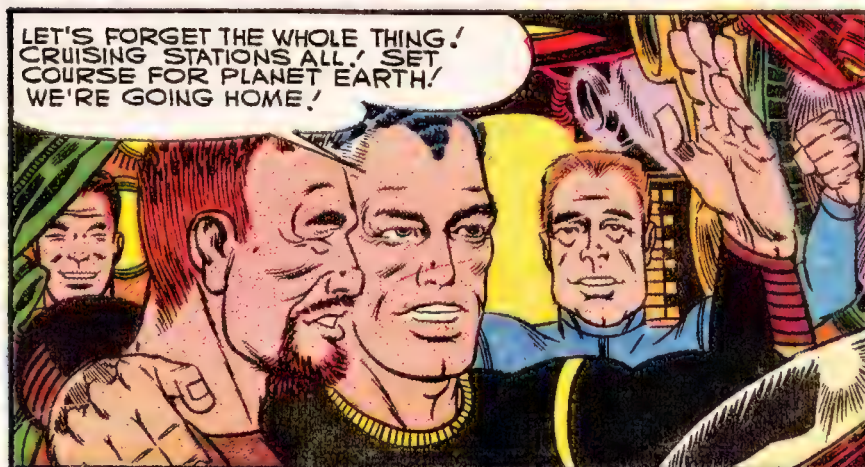


WE FOUND  
YOUR  
NOTES,  
SIR!

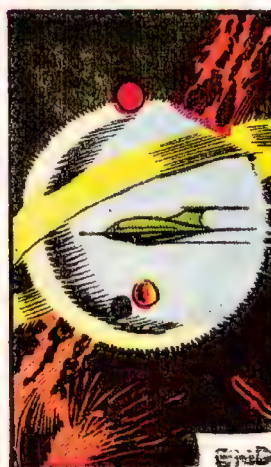
THEN YOU  
KNOW NOW WHY  
WE CAN'T GO HOME!  
WHY I COULDN'T  
BEAR TO BREAK  
THE BAD NEWS!



YOU WERE WRONG NOT TO  
TELL US, SIR! THAT WOULD  
HAVE BEEN HARD TO  
SWALLOW... BUT  
AFTER ALL, HOME  
IS WHERE OUR  
FAMILIES  
ARE!



LET'S FORGET THE WHOLE THING!  
CRUISING STATIONS ALL! SET  
COURSE FOR PLANET EARTH!  
WE'RE GOING HOME!

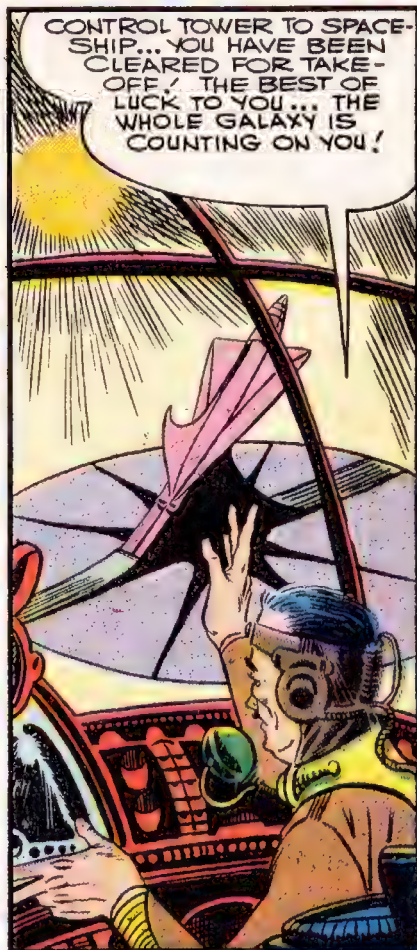
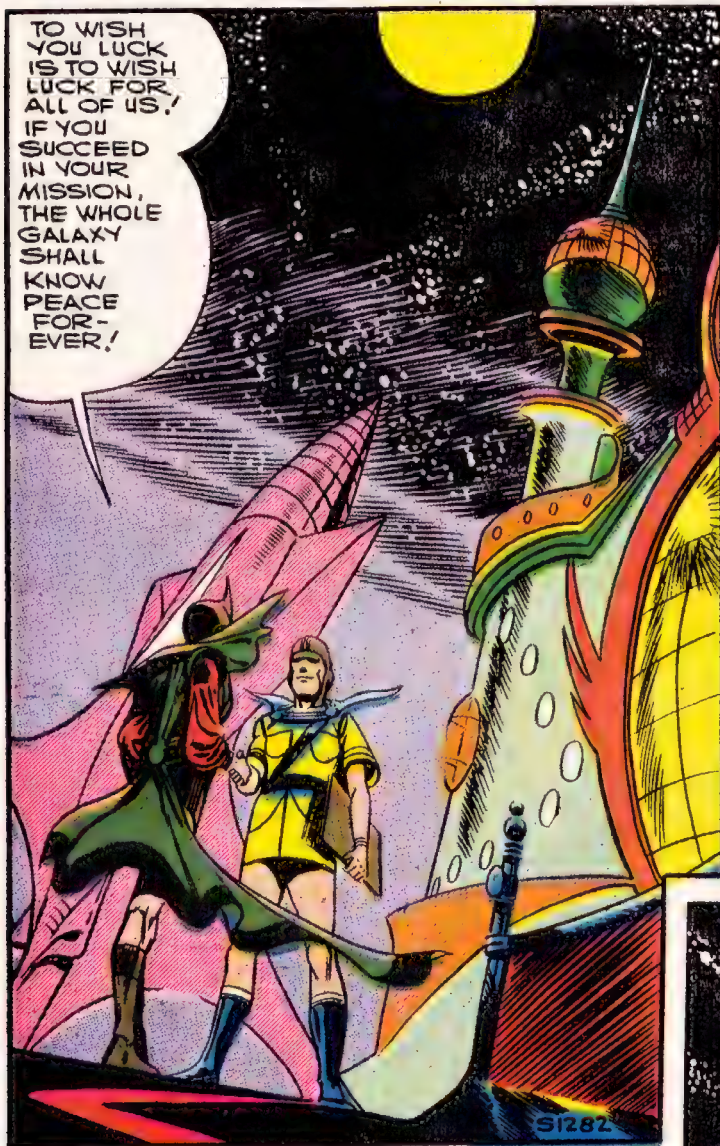


END

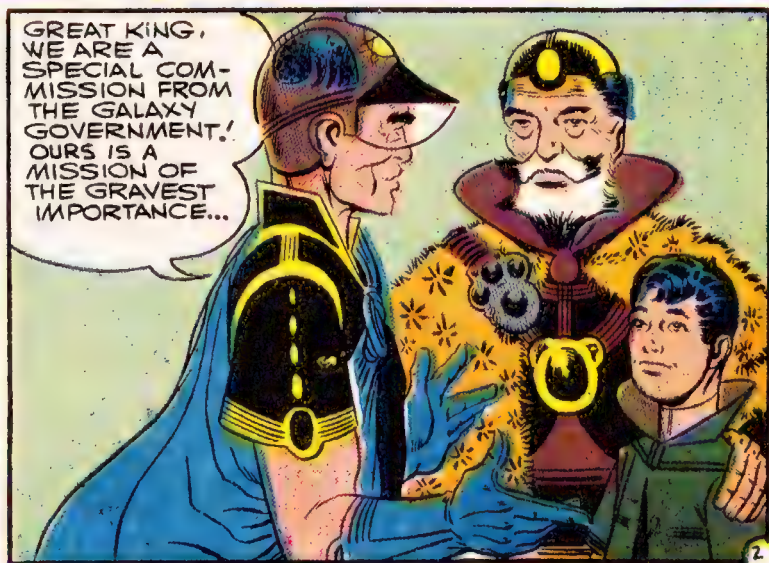
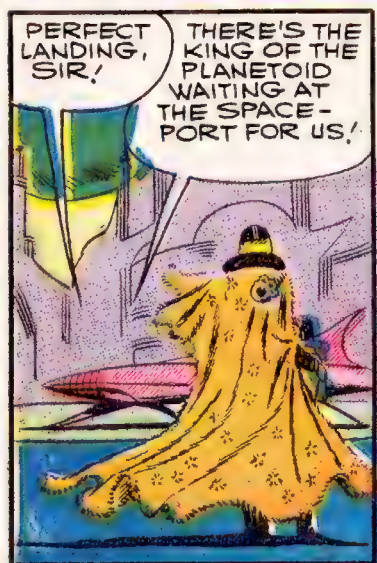
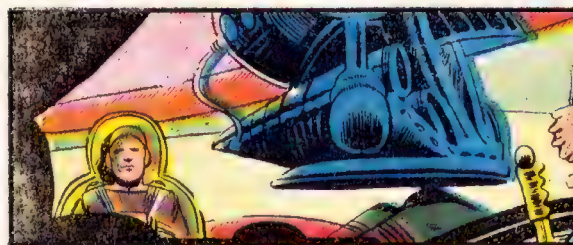
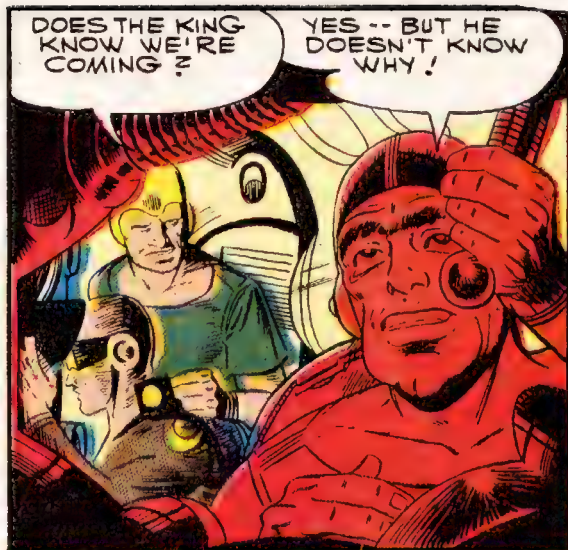


# THE KING OF PLANETOID X

**T**HE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE GALAXY GOVERNMENT HAD VOTED / AND NOW THE SPECIAL COMMISSION WAS ABOUT TO BLAST OFF FOR PLANETOID X...









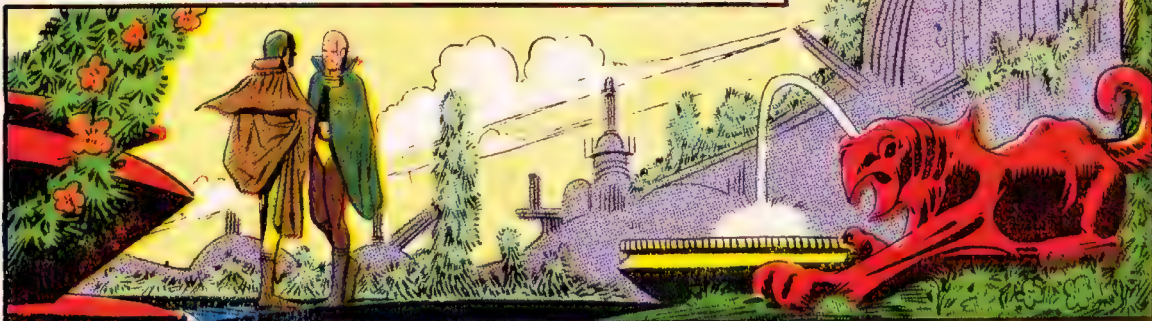
...AS YOU KNOW, THE WHOLE GALAXY IS RECOVERING FROM A SERIES OF WARS! DURING OUR TERRIBLE ERA OF TURMOIL AND STRIFE, ONLY YOUR PLANETOID HAS REMAINED AT PEACE...



ONLY HERE HAVE THE BEINGS KNOWN UNINTERRUPTED CONTENTMENT AND PROSPERITY! THIS, GREAT KING, THE HIGH COUNCIL CHOOSES TO REGARD AS PROOF OF THE WISDOM OF YOUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT...



... AND OUR MISSION IS TO ASK YOU TO INSTITUTE YOUR SYSTEM ALL OVER THE GALAXY! BE KING OF THE GALAXY, SO THE REST OF US MIGHT KNOW THE SAME PEACE, CONTENTMENT AND PROSPERITY!



HEAR THIS -- IT IS TRUE THAT THOSE WHO LIVE ON MY PLANETOID NEVER WAR AMONG THEMSELVES AND HAVE ALL THE MATERIAL OBJECTS THEY DESIRE... BUT ONLY AT A VERY GREAT PRICE!



I AM BENEVOLENT... THAT IS TRUE -- BUT I AM A BENEVOLENT DESPOT! MY SUBJECT'S LIVES ARE COMPLETELY REGULATED... ALL DECISIONS ARE MINE!



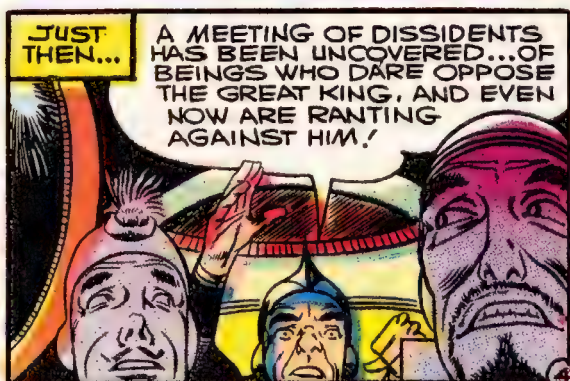
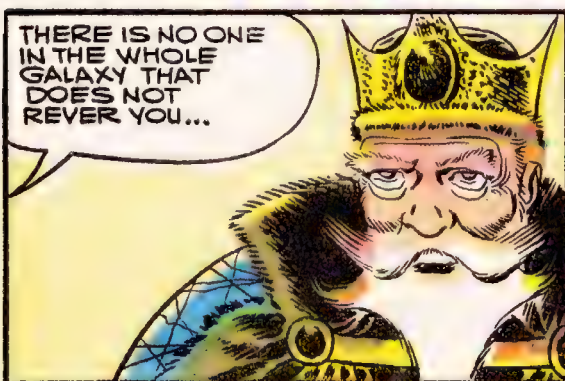
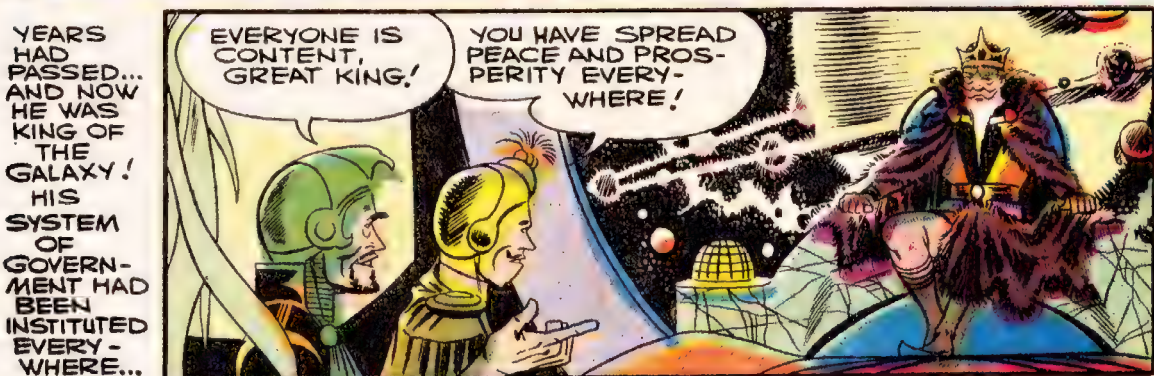
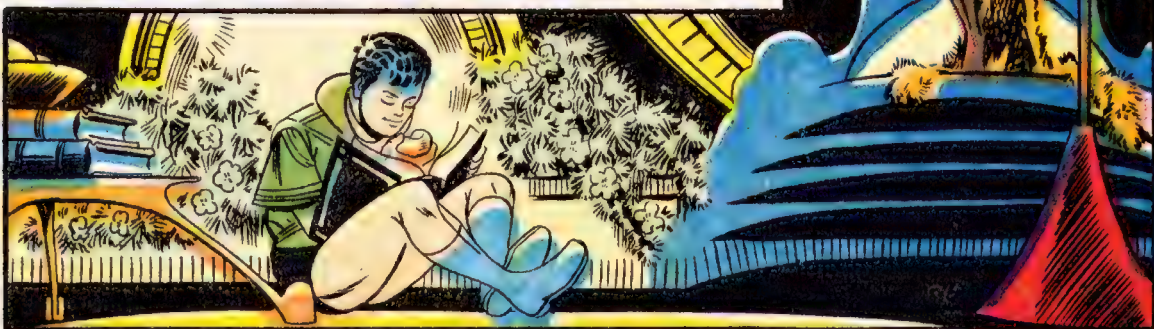
WE DO NOT CARE!

FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY -- FREEDOM IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY!

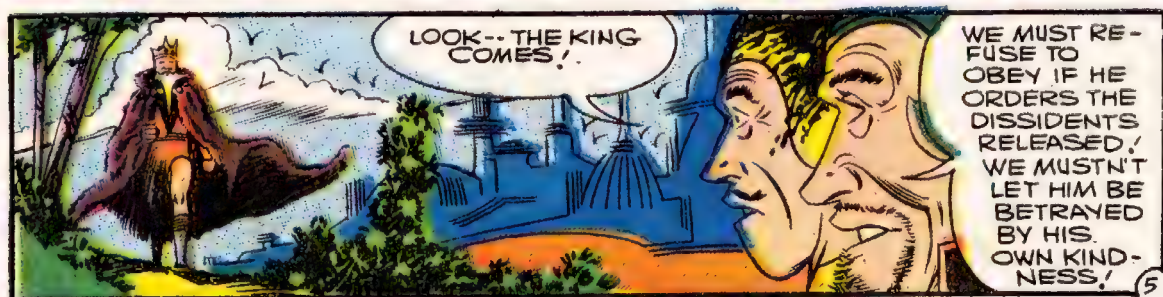
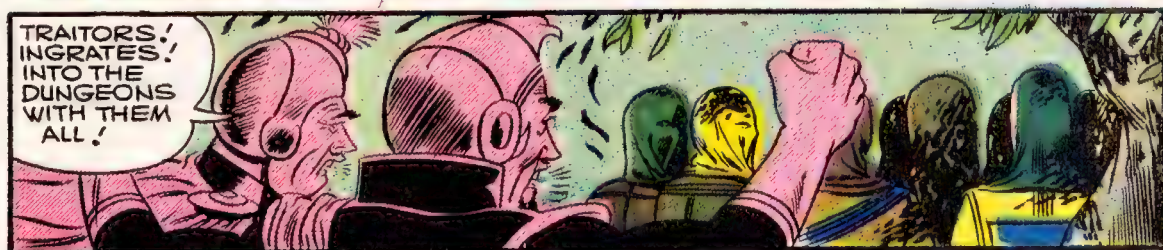
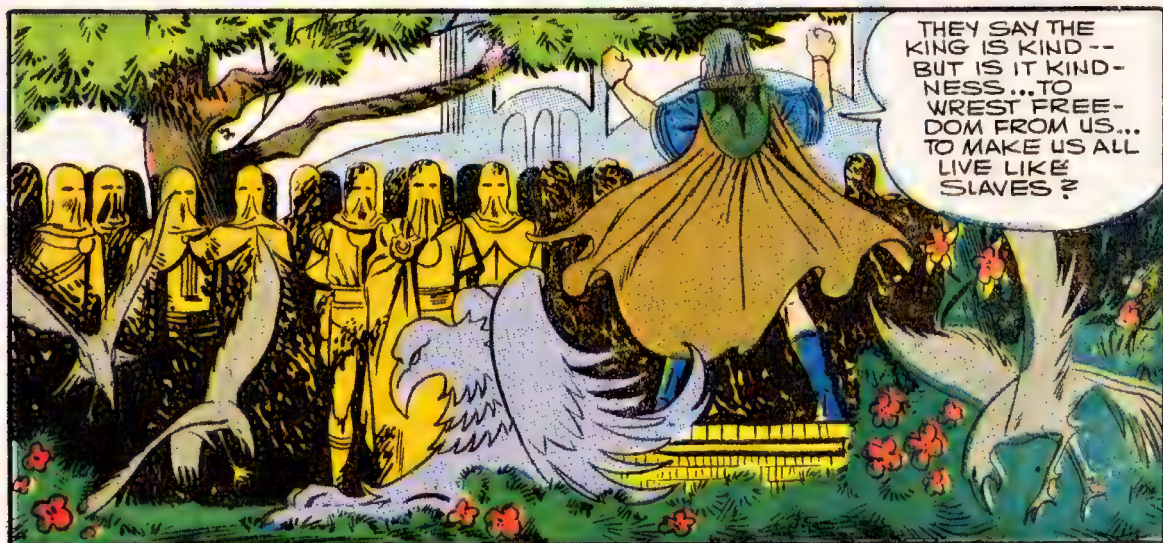
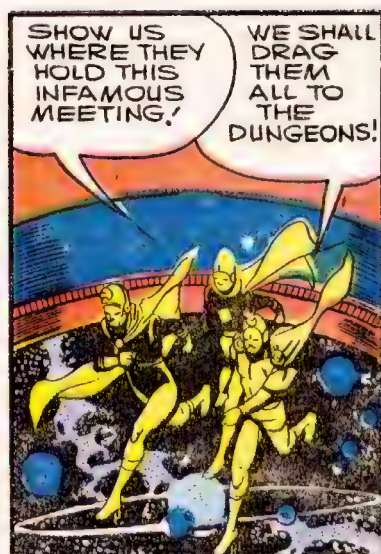
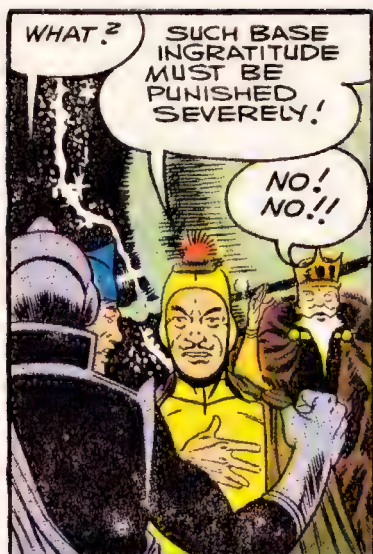
PLEASE -- WE BEG YOU... GRANT OUR REQUEST!



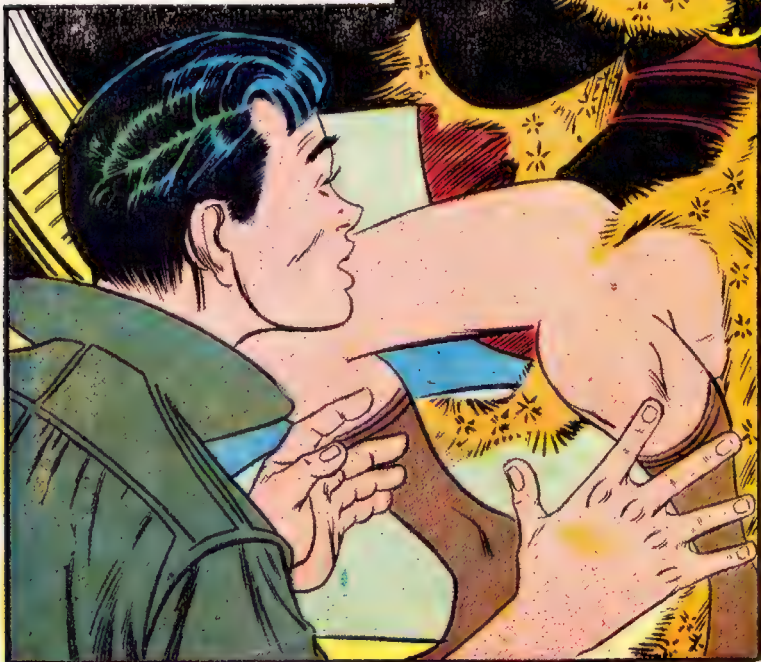




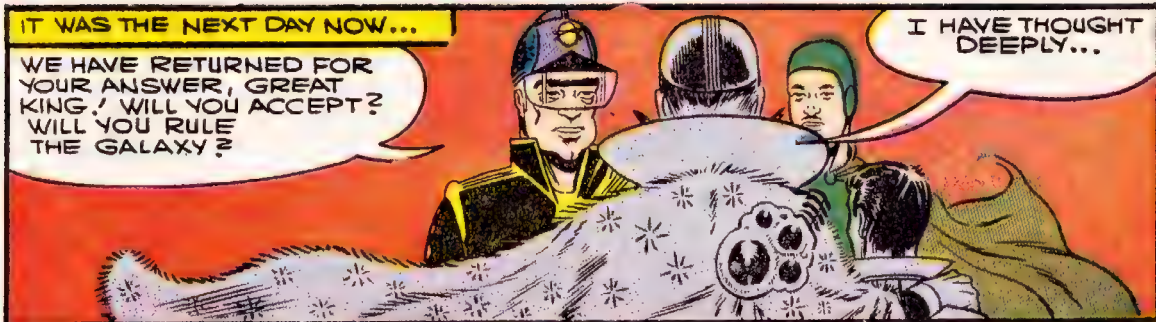








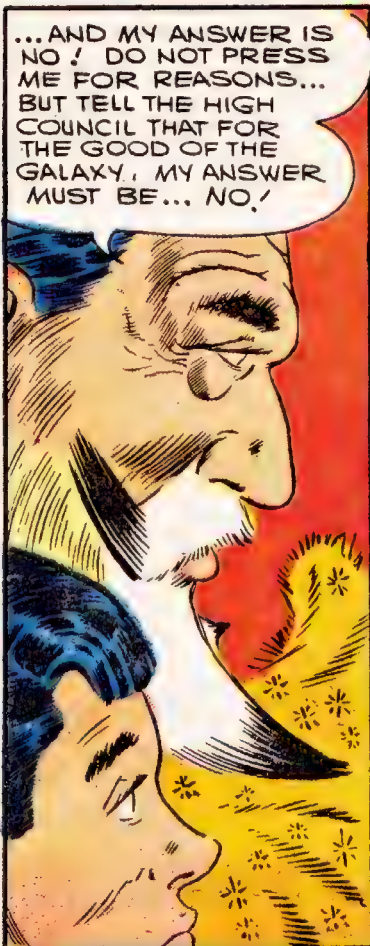




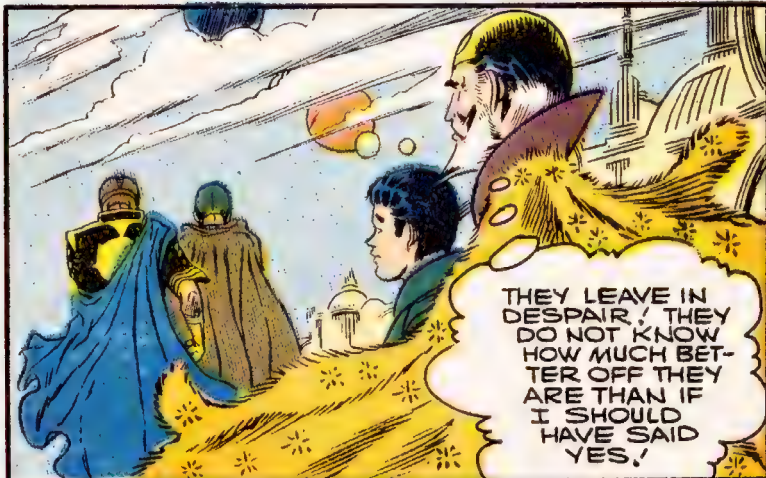
IT WAS THE NEXT DAY NOW...

WE HAVE RETURNED FOR YOUR ANSWER, GREAT KING! WILL YOU ACCEPT? WILL YOU RULE THE GALAXY?

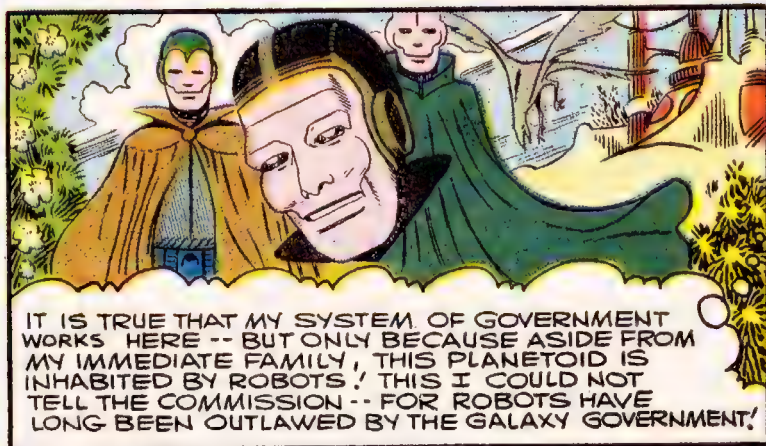
I HAVE THOUGHT DEEPLY...



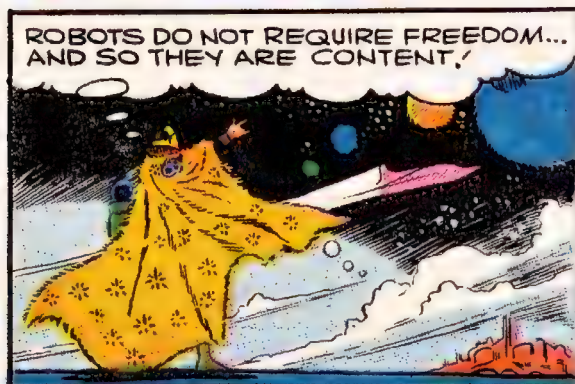
...AND MY ANSWER IS NO! DO NOT PRESS ME FOR REASONS... BUT TELL THE HIGH COUNCIL THAT FOR THE GOOD OF THE GALAXY, MY ANSWER MUST BE... NO!



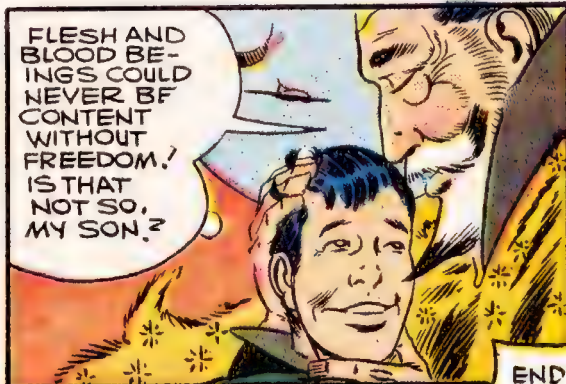
THEY LEAVE IN DESPAIR, THEY DO NOT KNOW HOW MUCH BETTER OFF THEY ARE THAN IF I SHOULD HAVE SAID YES!



IT IS TRUE THAT MY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WORKS HERE -- BUT ONLY BECAUSE ASIDE FROM MY IMMEDIATE FAMILY, THIS PLANETOID IS INHABITED BY ROBOTS! THIS I COULD NOT TELL THE COMMISSION -- FOR ROBOTS HAVE LONG BEEN OUTLAWED BY THE GALAXY GOVERNMENT!



ROBOTS DO NOT REQUIRE FREEDOM... AND SO THEY ARE CONTENT!



FLESH AND BLOOD BEINGS COULD NEVER BE CONTENT WITHOUT FREEDOM! IS THAT NOT SO, MY SON?

END





STRANGE  
SUSPENSE STORIES

Nº 31

# STRANGE

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE



AUTHORITY

# SUSPENSE STORIES

10¢

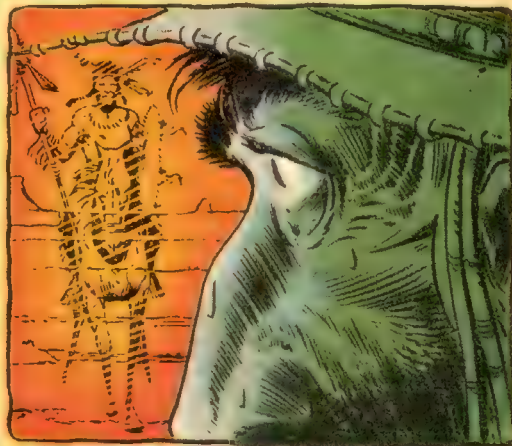
A CHAMPION PUBLICATION



MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL.



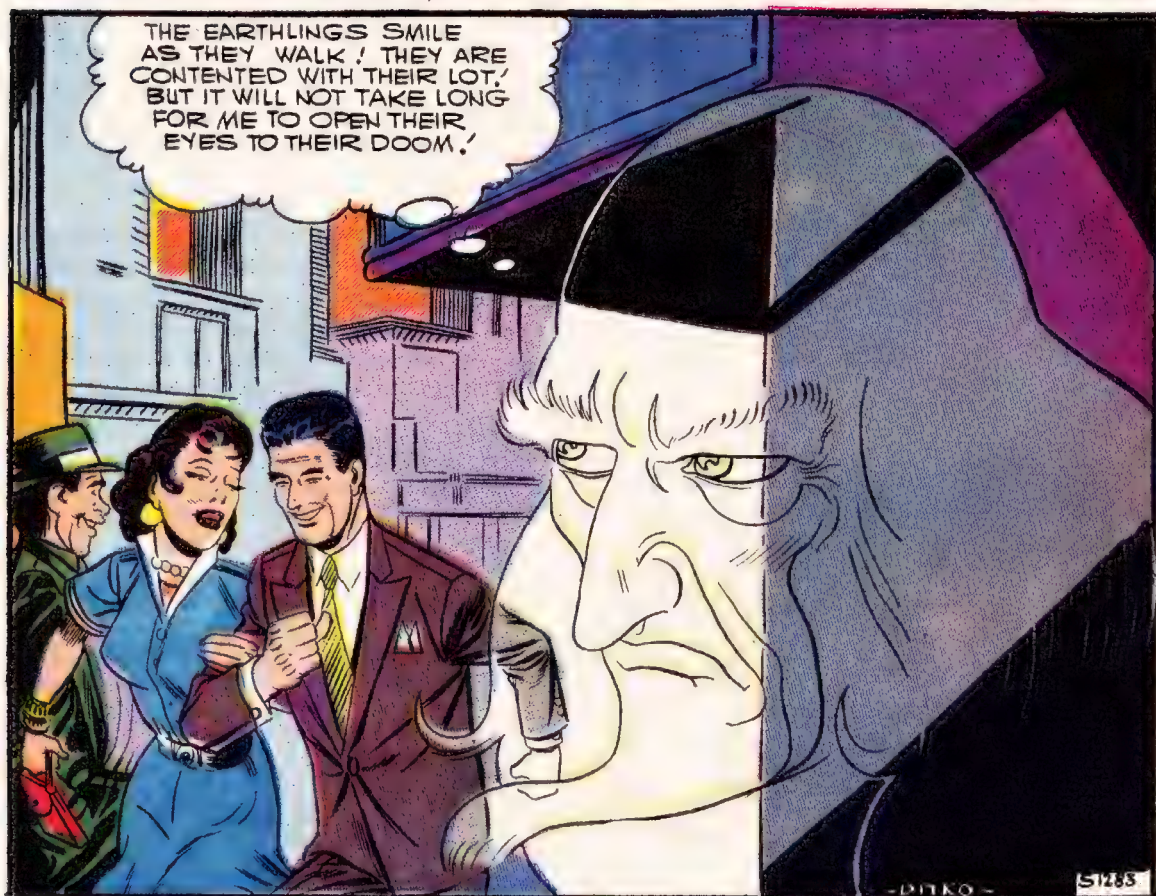
THE MAN WHO COULD NEVER BE KILLED



DESERT JUSTICE



# THE GLOOMY ONE

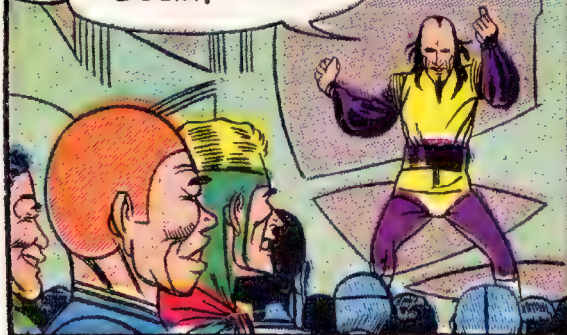


-DITKO-

51283

ON HIS OWN PLANET HE HAD BEEN KNOWN AS THE GLOOMY ONE ...

LAUGH, FOOLS, LAUGH-- BUT YOUR LAUGHTER WILL FADE WHEN MY PROPHECIES COME TRUE ... AND YOU FIND YOURSELVES CRUSHED BY YOUR DOOM!



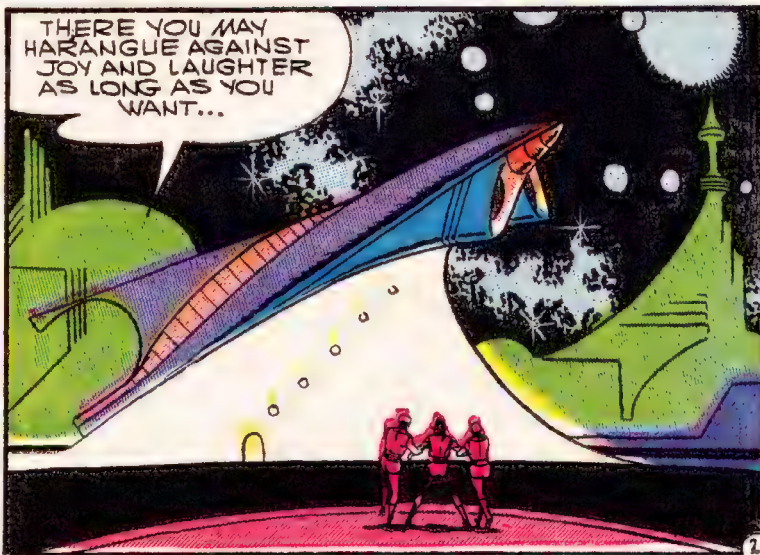
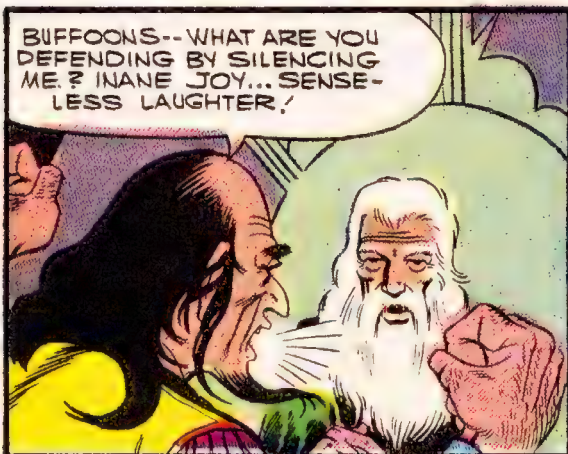
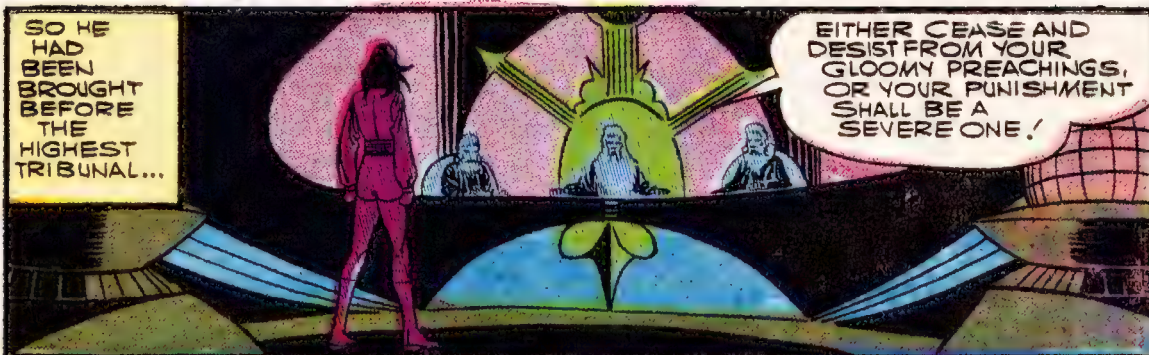
THROUGH ALL HIS WAKING HOURS, HE HAD THUNDERED THE DETAILS OF HIS MORBID VISIONS ...

THIS HAS GONE ON TOO LONG! THE GLOOMY ONE HAS BEGUN TO INFECT THE PEOPLE!

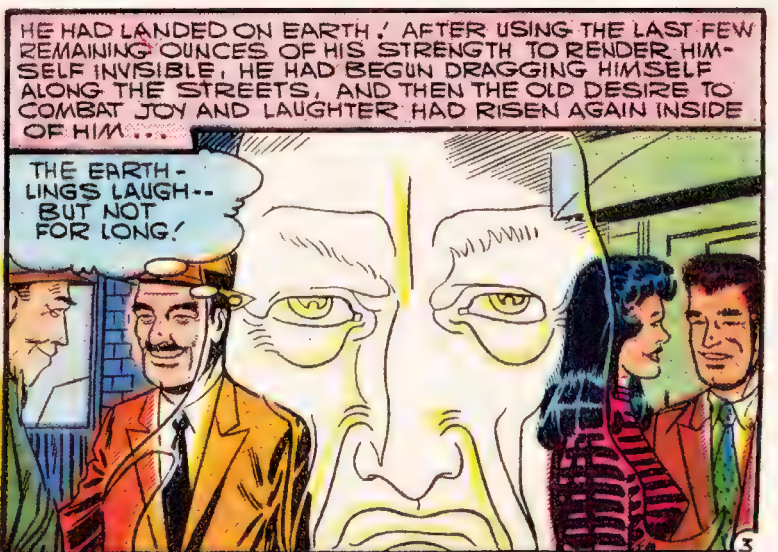
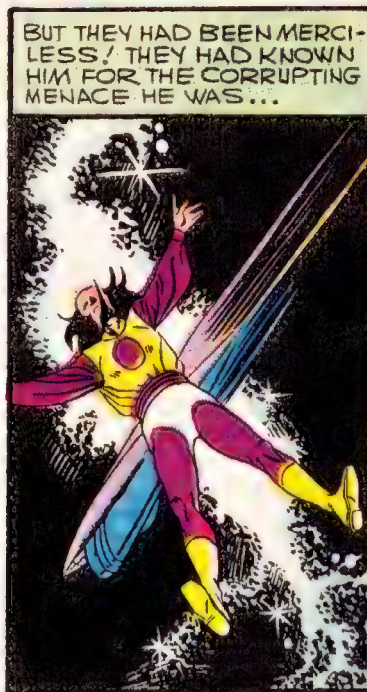
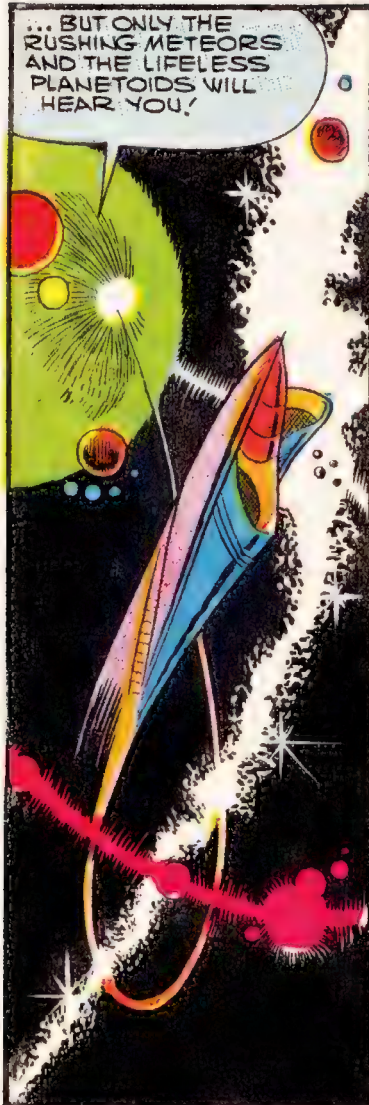
SMILES ARE FADING! NO LONGER IS LAUGHTER HEARD!





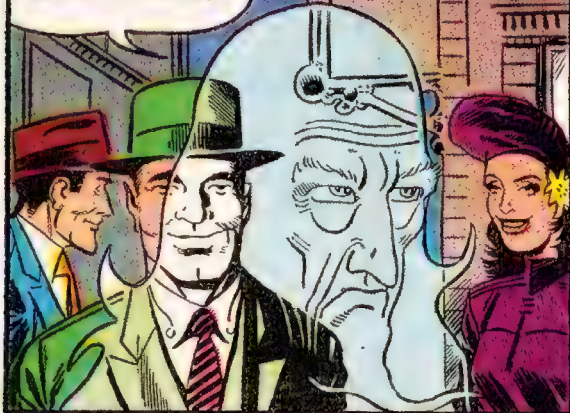




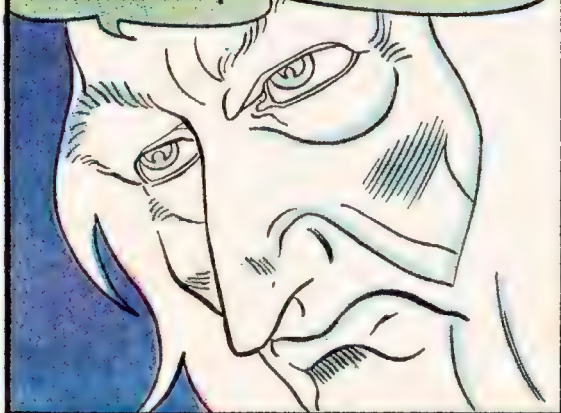




IF I SPEAK TO THEM IN MY OWN FORM,  
THEY WILL BE TOO FEARFUL TO LISTEN!  
BUT I HAVE THE POWER TO  
INSINUATE MYSELF INSIDE  
ONE OF THE  
EARTHLINGS...



I MUST CHOOSE WISELY... I MUST FIND  
ONE WHOSE TEMPERAMENT IS AKIN TO  
MINE! FOR THERE IS NO SECOND  
CHOICE! ONCE I AM INSIDE ANOTHER  
FORM -- I MUST REMAIN INSIDE  
UNTIL THE END!



THE FOOLS...  
THEY ARE ALL  
SMILING! BUT  
THERE MUST BE  
ONE AKIN TO  
ME AMONG THEM...  
JUST ONE...



BUT SUDDENLY...

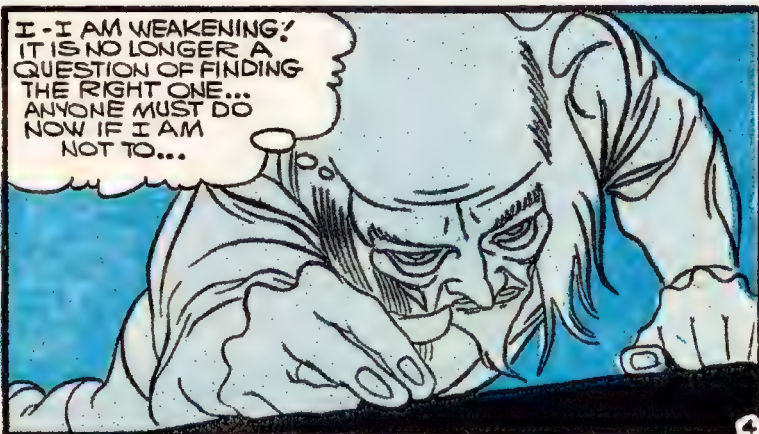
GASP!



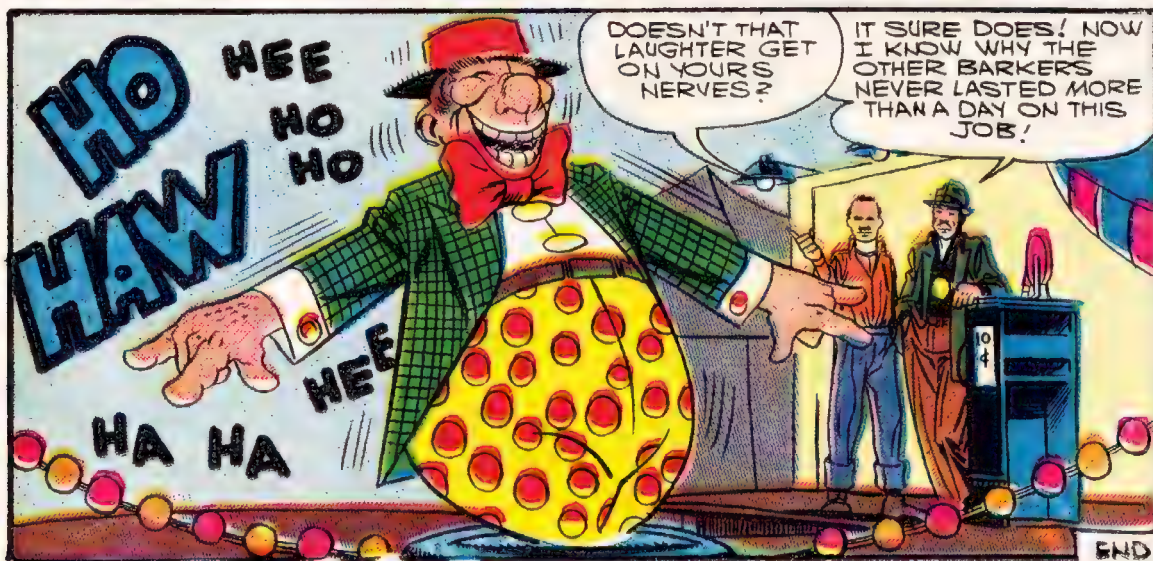
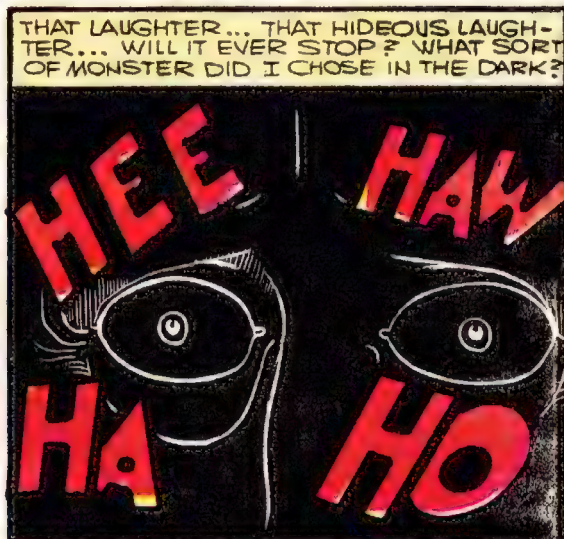
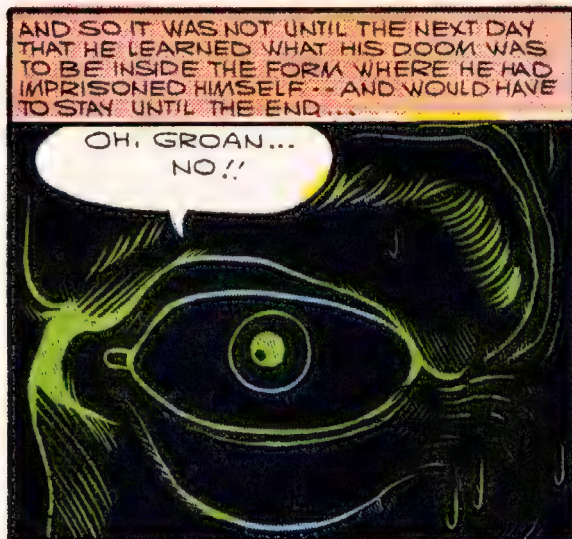
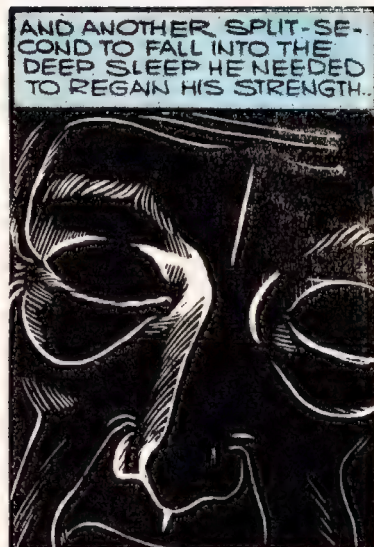
I'VE WAITED TOO LONG! I AM  
PHYSIOLOGICALLY UNSUITED TO  
THE EARTH-HABITAT AS AN  
INVISIBLE!



I - I AM WEAKENING!  
IT IS NO LONGER A  
QUESTION OF FINDING  
THE RIGHT ONE...  
ANYONE MUST DO  
NOW IF I AM  
NOT TO...









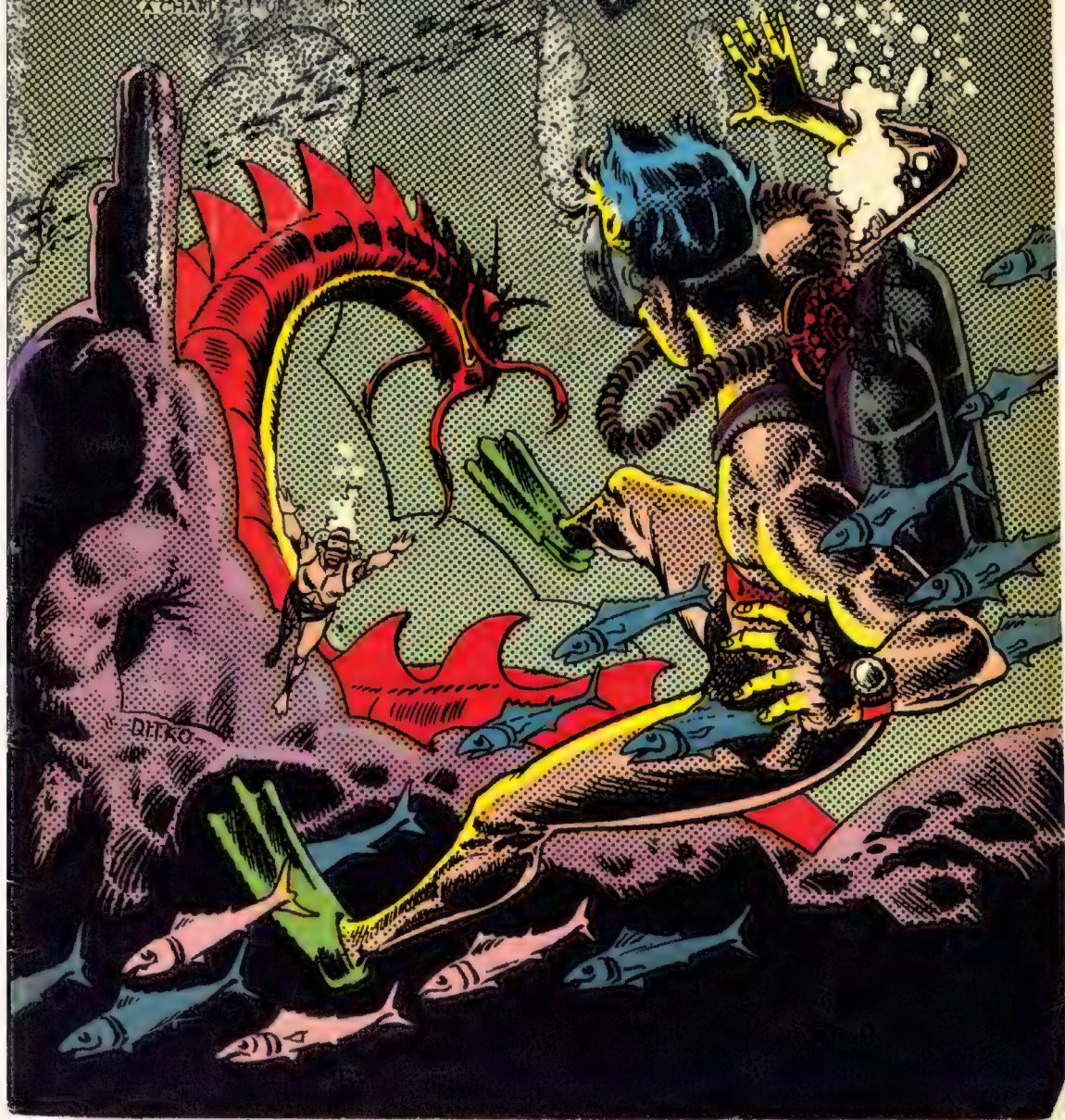
OUT OF THIS WORLD  
No 5

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

# OUT OF THIS WORLD

10¢

ARCHIE & FRIENDS





FROM THE OUTERMOST REACHES OF SPACE IT HAD COME -- THE THICK BLACK CLOUD THAT CONTAINED A SENTIENT THINKING BEING ....

# THE MAN WHO STEPPED OUT OF A CLOUD



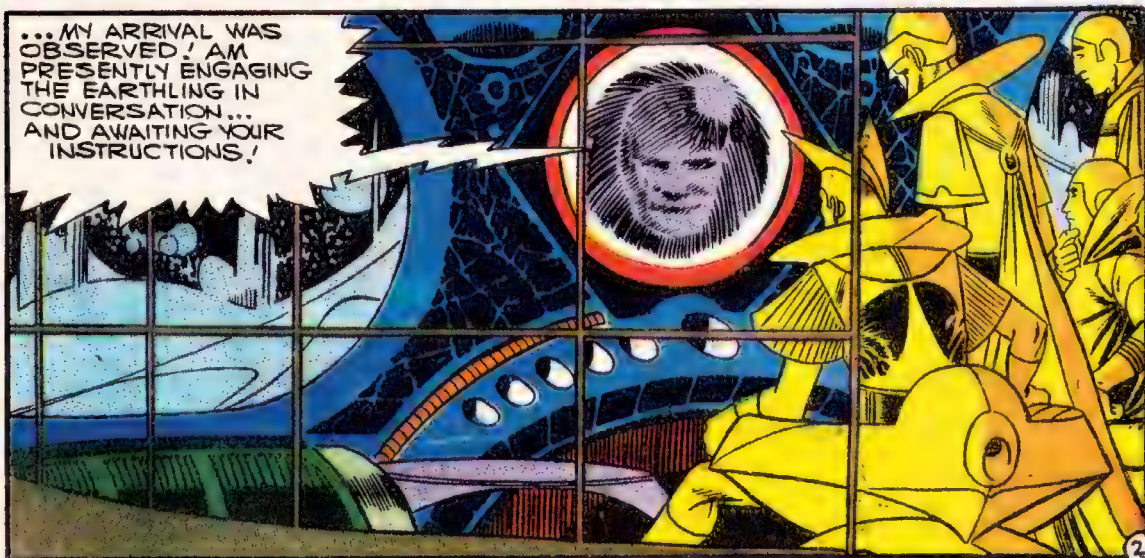
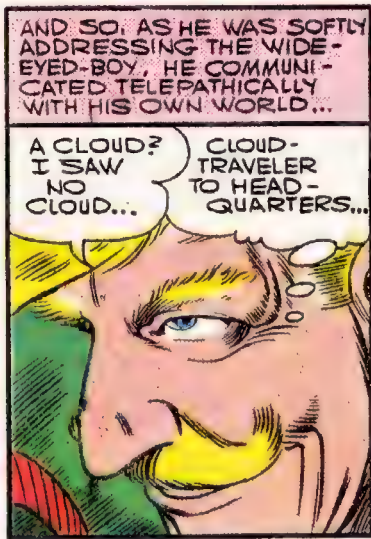
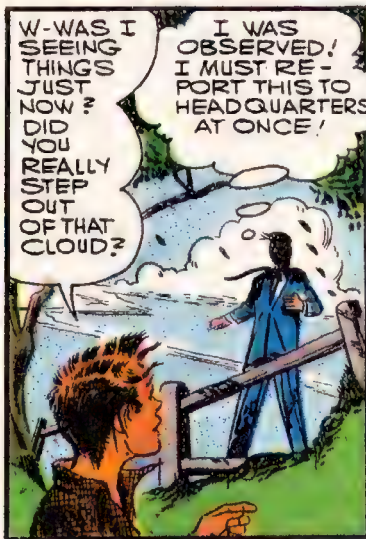
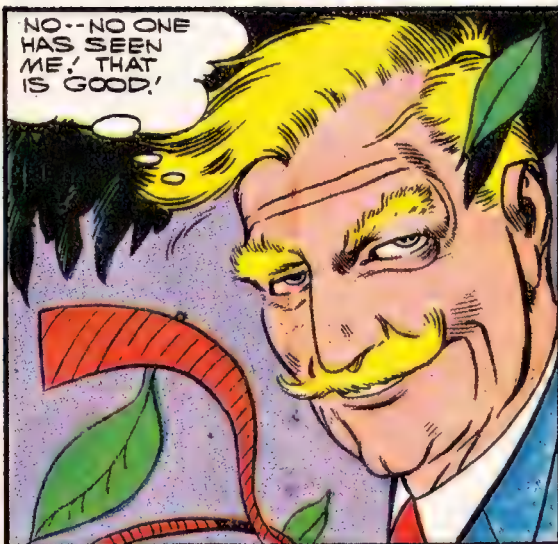
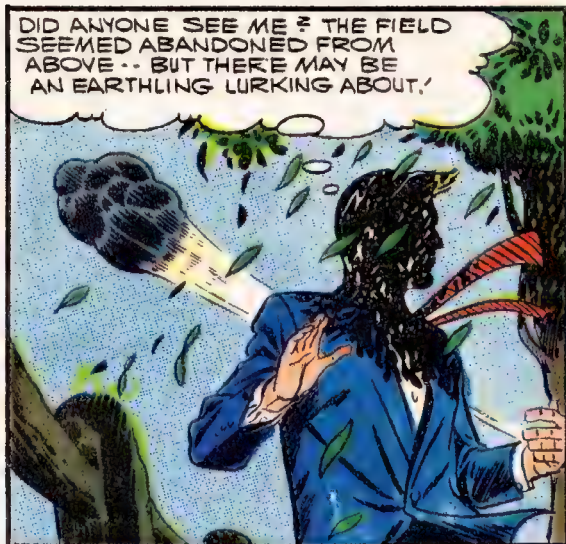
FOR A SPLIT-SECOND IT HOVERED OVER A FIELD...



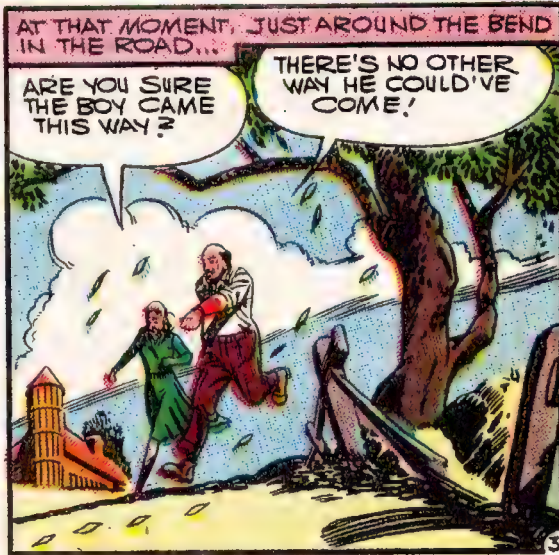
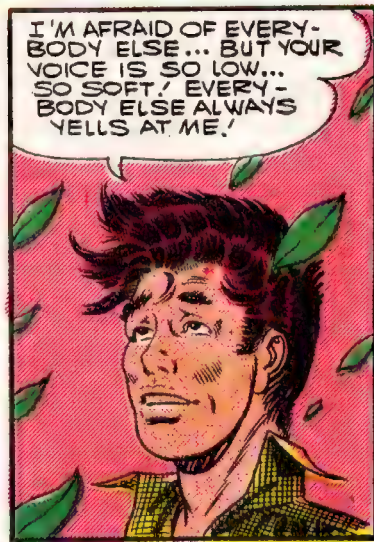
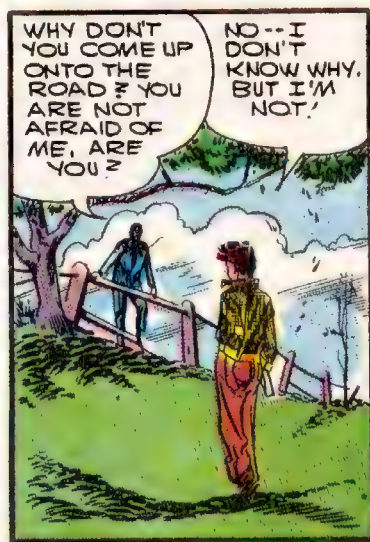
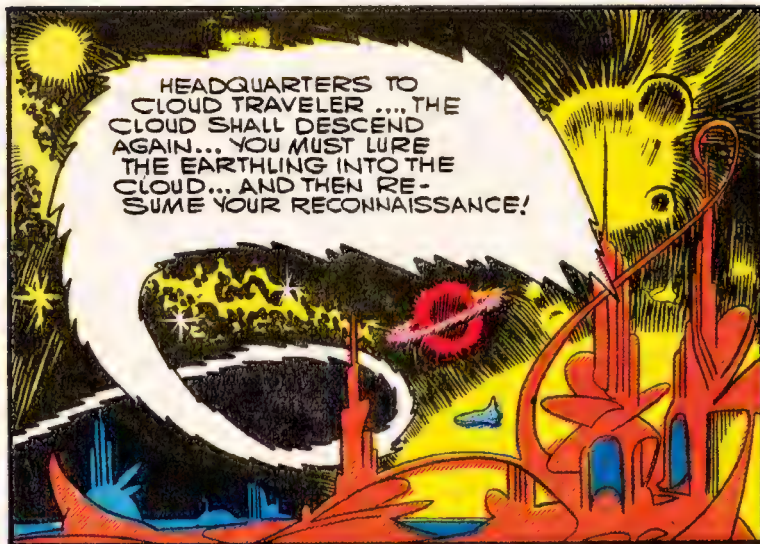
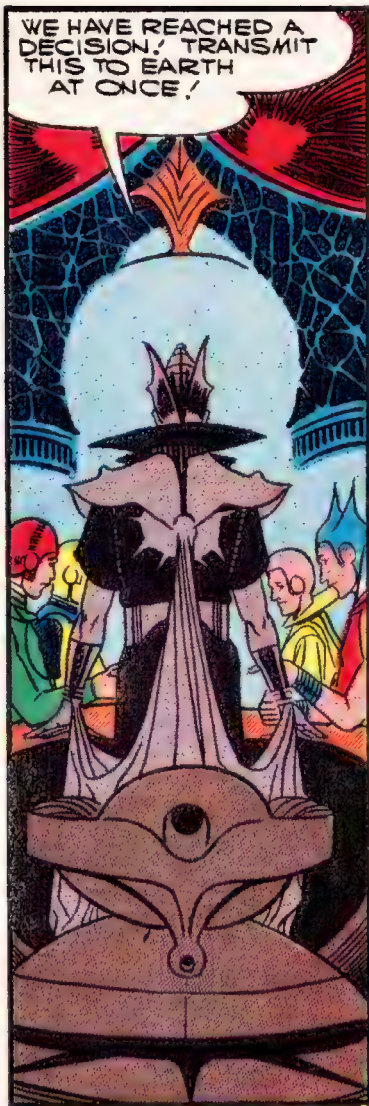
...AND THEN THE MAN STEPPED OUT...



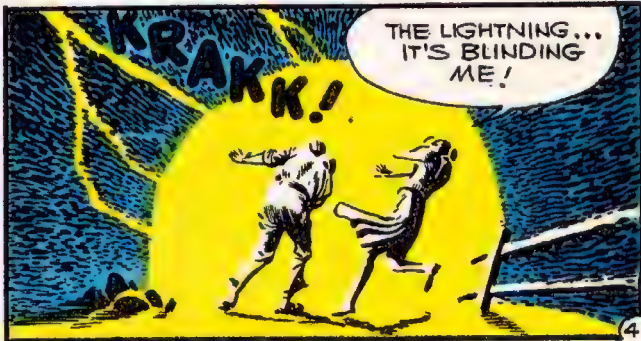
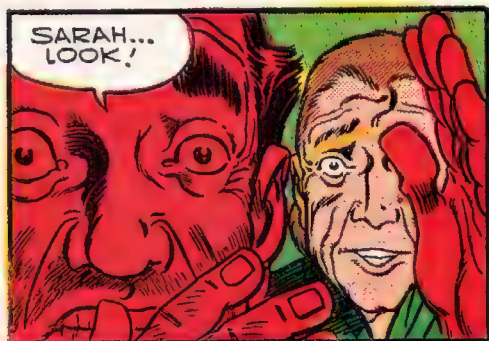
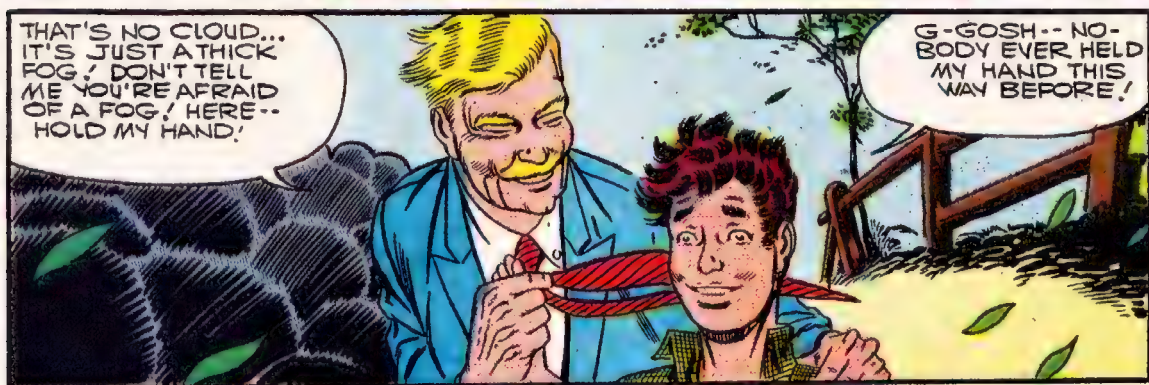
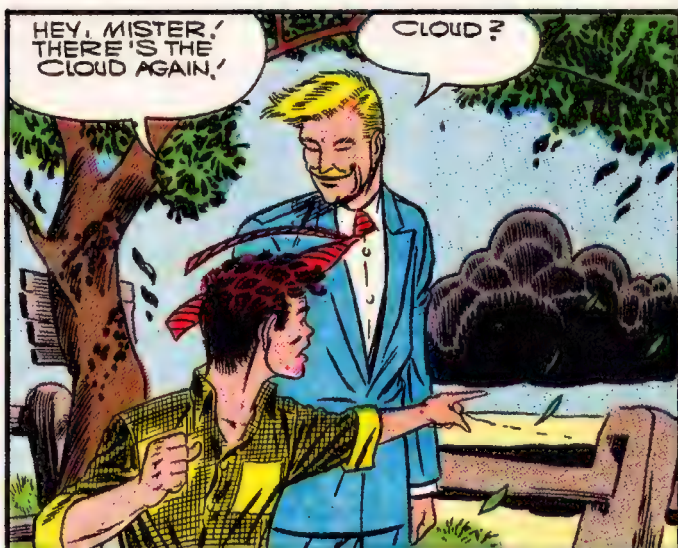










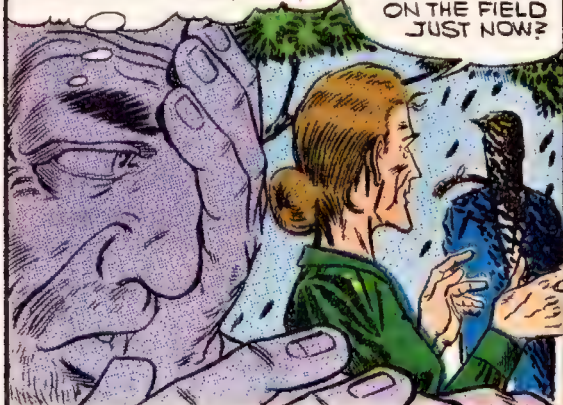




WHEN THEY UNCOVERED THEIR EYES...

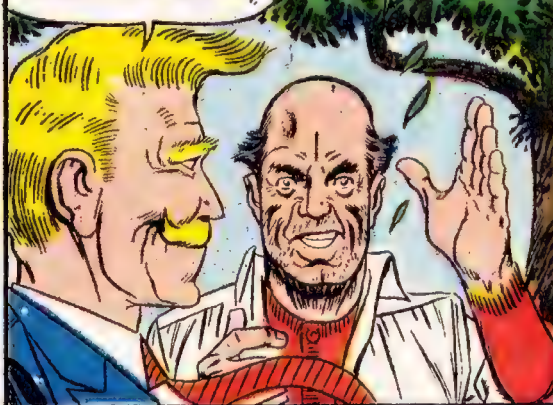
I-I WAS SO SURE I SAW HIM STANDING THERE... BUT NOW THERE'S ONLY THAT MAN!

SAY, DID YOU SEE A BOY STANDING ON THE FIELD JUST NOW?



A BOY? I SAW NO BOY! COULD YOU HAVE BEEN MISLED BY AN ILLUSION CREATED BY THE LIGHTNING BOLT?

AAAHH... GOOD RIDDANCE TO THE BOY, I SAY!



...THAT BOY'S GIVEN US NOTHING BUT TROUBLE EVER SINCE WE TOOK HIM IN FROM THE ORPHANAGE! A MISFIT! THAT'S WHAT HE IS! AN UNGRATEFUL MISFIT WHO RAN AWAY THE FIRST CHANCE HE GOT!



HE'LL BE THE SAME WHERE- EVER HE IS! THAT KIND NEVER CHANGES!

I AM GLAD THE BOY SAW ME ARRIVE ON MY PEACEFUL RECONNAISSANCE! I AM GLAD THAT HE IS NOW ON HIS WAY TO MY WORLD!



...FOR MY WORLD IS FURTHER ADVANCED IN METHODS OF TREATING DISTURBED CHILDREN! ONCE HE HAS GROWN INTO A MAN, HE SHALL BE PERMITTED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN STAYING ON OR RETURNING TO EARTH...



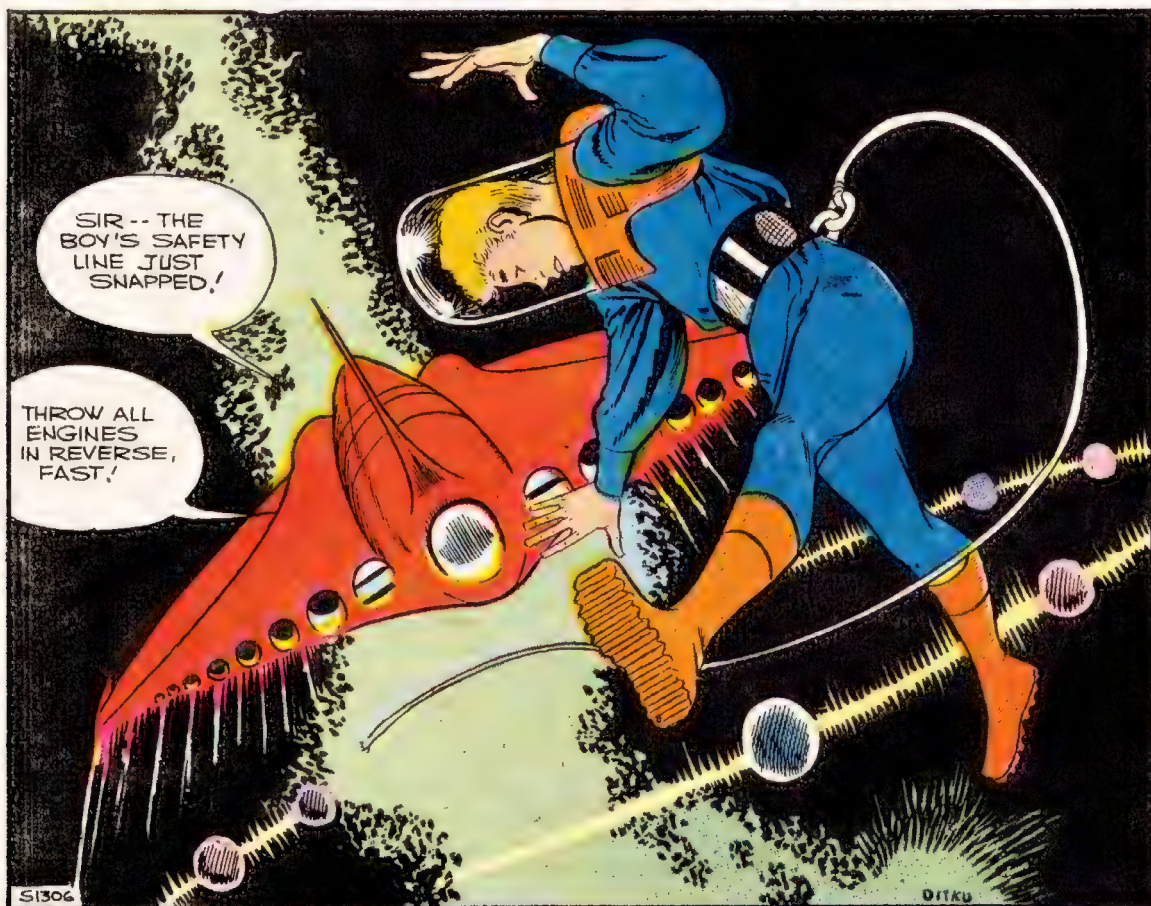
...BUT UNTIL THAT TIME COMES, HE SHALL BE HAPPY UP THERE!



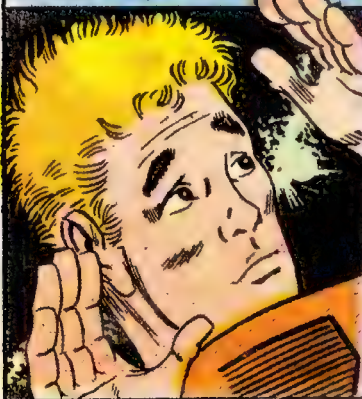
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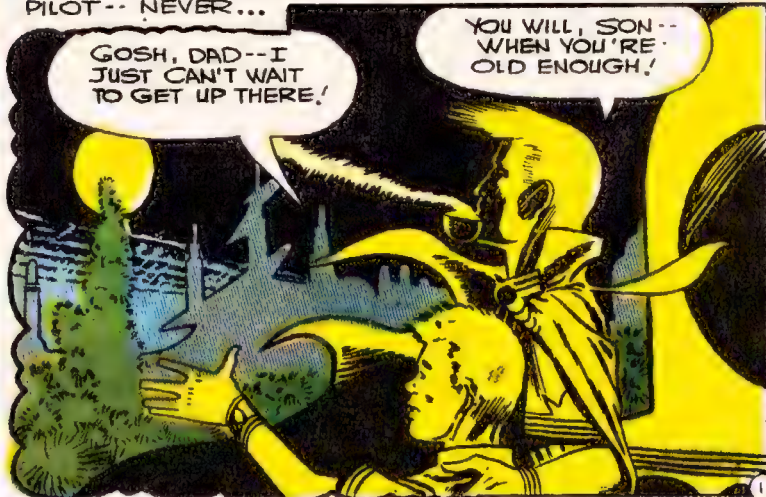
# STOWAWAY



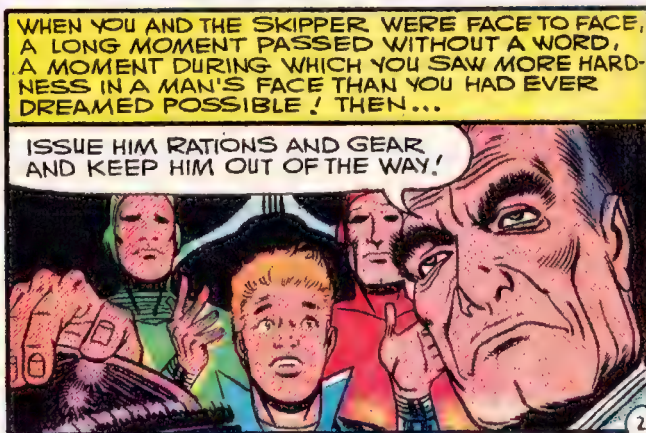
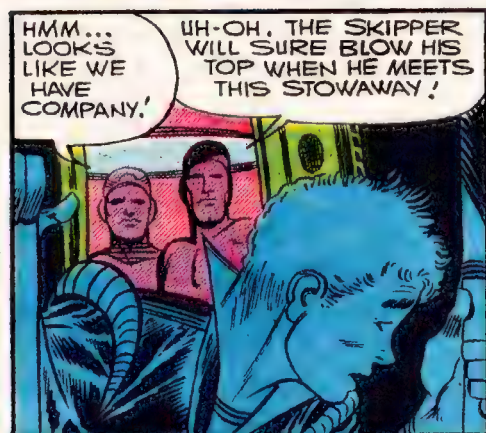
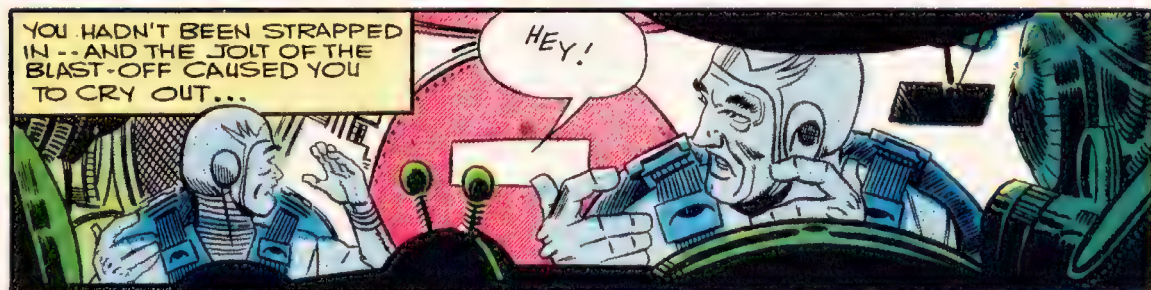
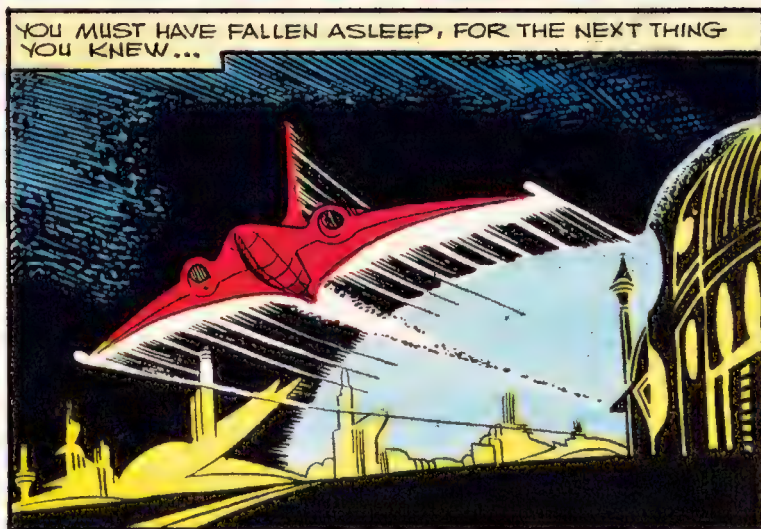
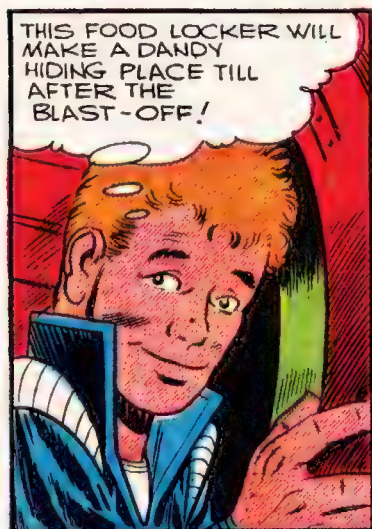
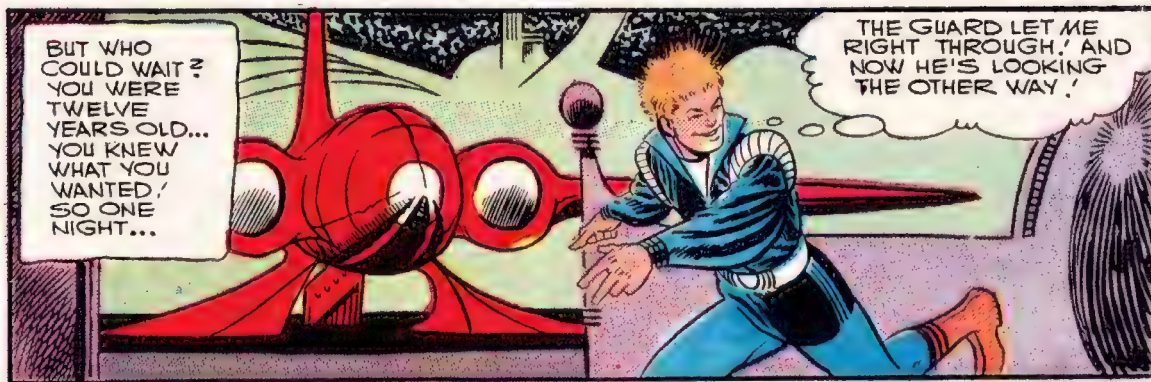
YOUR HEART SINKS WITH DESPAIR AS THE SHIP DWINDLES IN THE DISTANCE! YOU KNOW YOU'VE DONE WRONG-- BUT TO BE LEFT THIS WAY, THAT'S JUST MEAN-- CRAZY...



IF YOU'D EVER KNOWN HOW TRAVELLING UP AMONG THE STARS CHANGED MEN, YOU'D NEVER HAVE ACHED TO BE A SPACE PILOT-- NEVER...

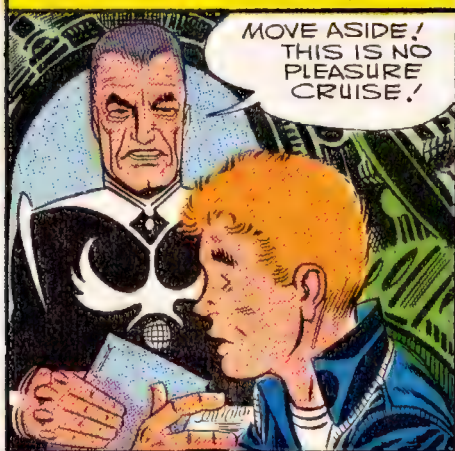




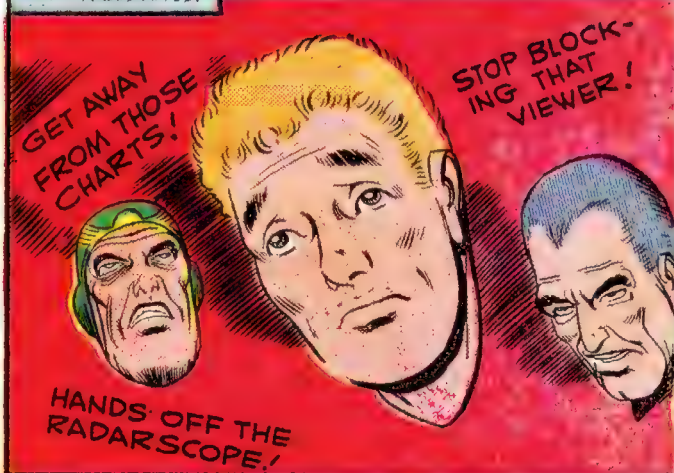




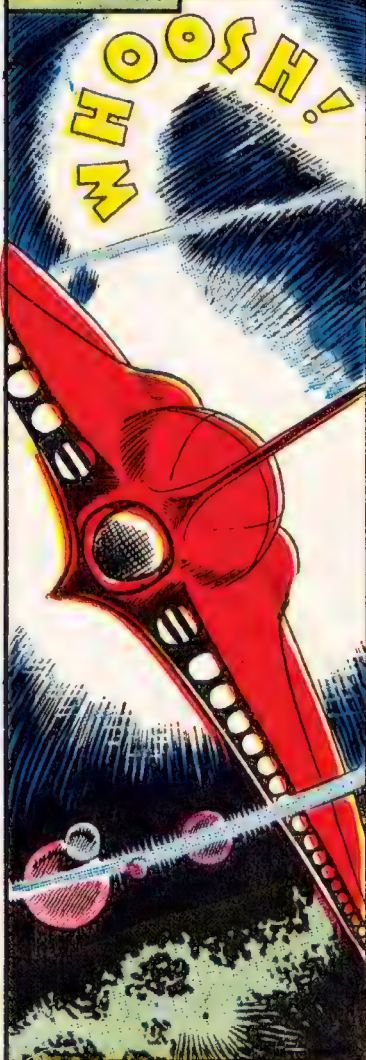
AND SO NOW, YOU WERE AMONG THE STARS-- BUT WHERE WAS THE FUN? NOBODY SPOKE TO YOU EXCEPT TO SAY...



THEY NEVER LET YOU FORGET THAT YOU HAVE BROKEN THE RULES - THAT YOU DIDN'T BELONG UP THERE...



THEN THE SPACE STORM STRUCK...

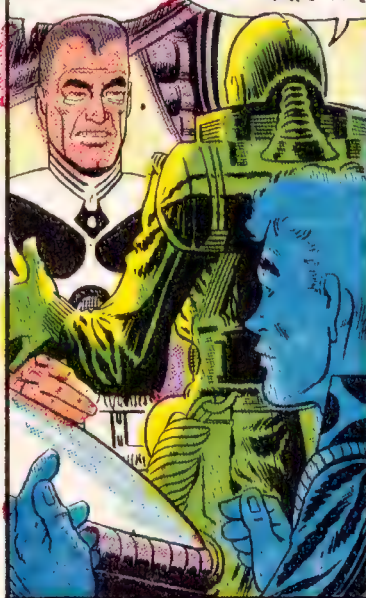


AFTER THE STORM HAD DIED DOWN...



WELL, WHAT'S THE STORY?

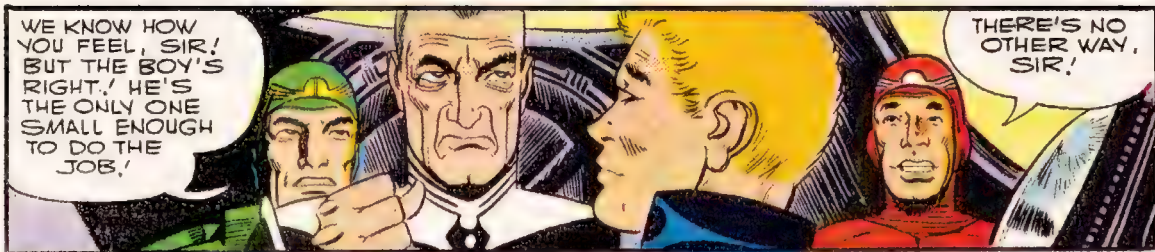
THE JET EXHAUST'S BEEN FOULED BY SPACE DEBRIS, SIR! IT'S WEDGED ALL THE WAY UP-- I COULDN'T CLEAR IT!



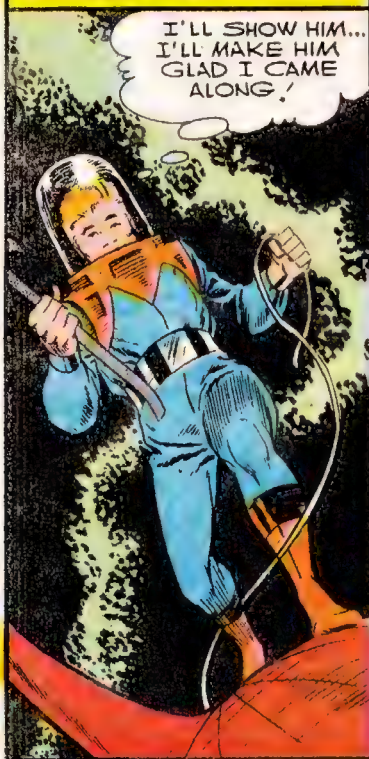
THAT WAS WHEN YOU SAW YOUR CHANCE...







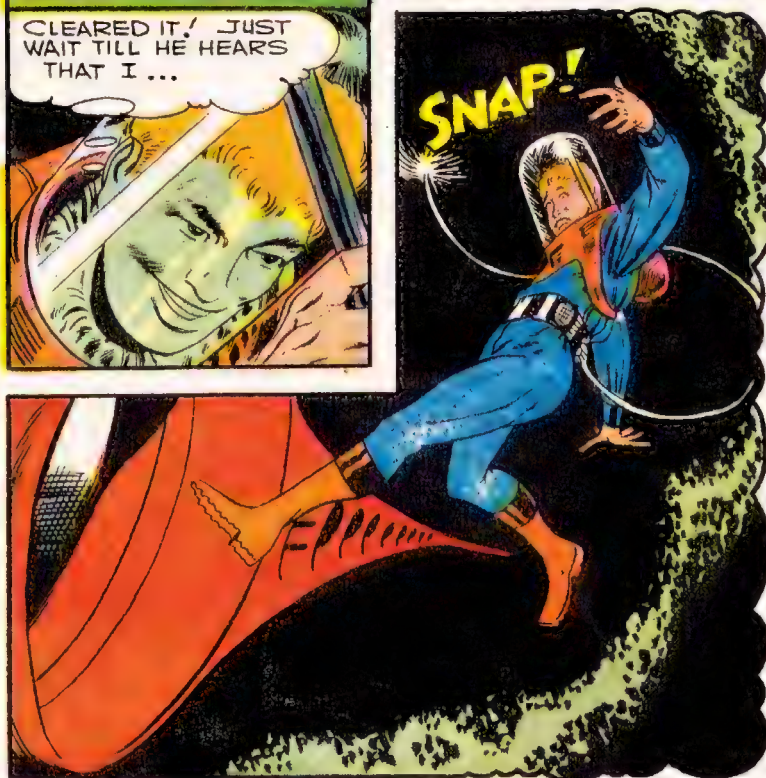
SO THE SKIPPER NODDED GRIMLY! AND AFTER BEING GEARED UP...



EVERYTHING WAS GOING SMOOTH AS SILK...



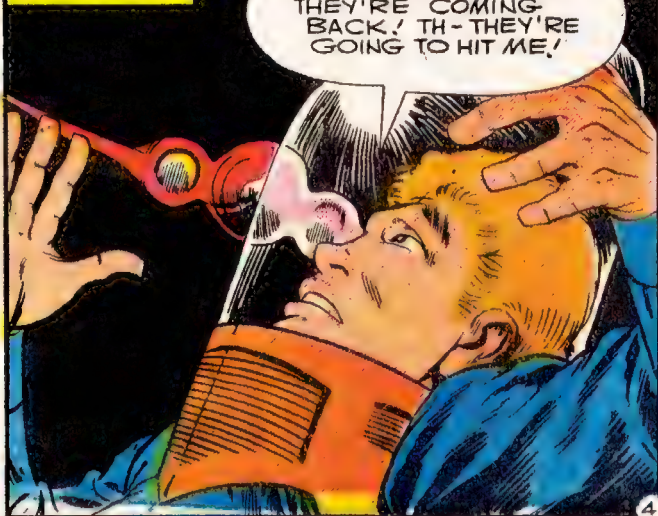
IT WAS THEN THAT THE STORM BLEW ITS LAST DYING GUST...



AND NOW...

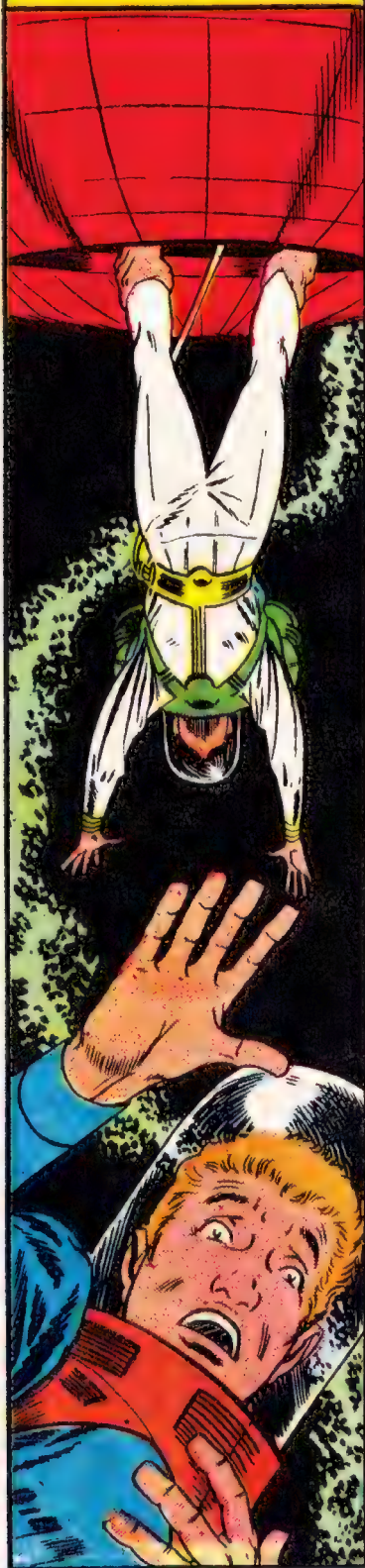


BUT THEN...





PANIC BLINDS YOU... PANIC PREVENTS YOU FROM SEEING THE FIGURE REACHING OUT FOR YOU...



GOT HIM!

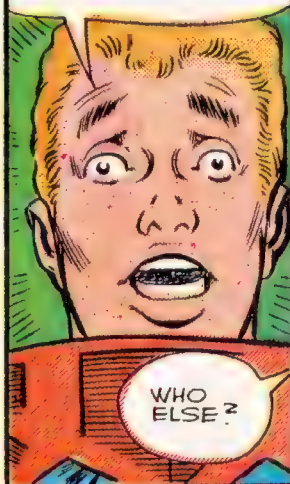


WHEW... FOR A SECOND I THOUGHT I WAS A GONER! GUESS YOU PULLED AWAY SO YOU COULD COME BACK AT THE RIGHT ANGLE, HUH? WHO PULLED ME IN?

THE SKIPPER DID!



T-THE SKIPPER...?

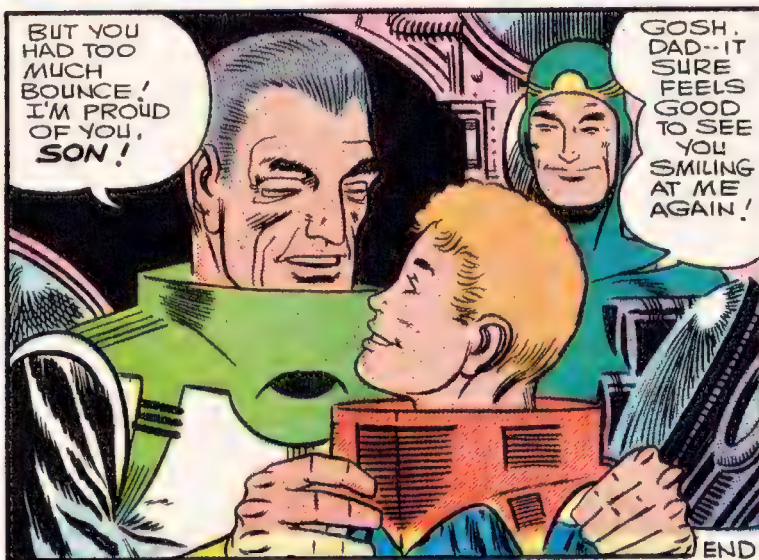


WHO ELSE?

I SAW RED WHEN YOU SHOWED UP AS A STOWAWAY ON MY SHIP! I GAVE THE CREW STRICT ORDERS TO GIVE YOU THE COLD SHOULDER! ANOTHER BOY WOULD'VE BEEN CRUSHED FLAT BY THE TREATMENT WE GAVE YOU...



BUT YOU HAD TOO MUCH BOUNCE! I'M PROUD OF YOU, SON!



GOSH, DAD--IT SURE FEELS GOOD TO SEE YOU SMILING AT ME AGAIN!

END





OUT OF THIS WORLD

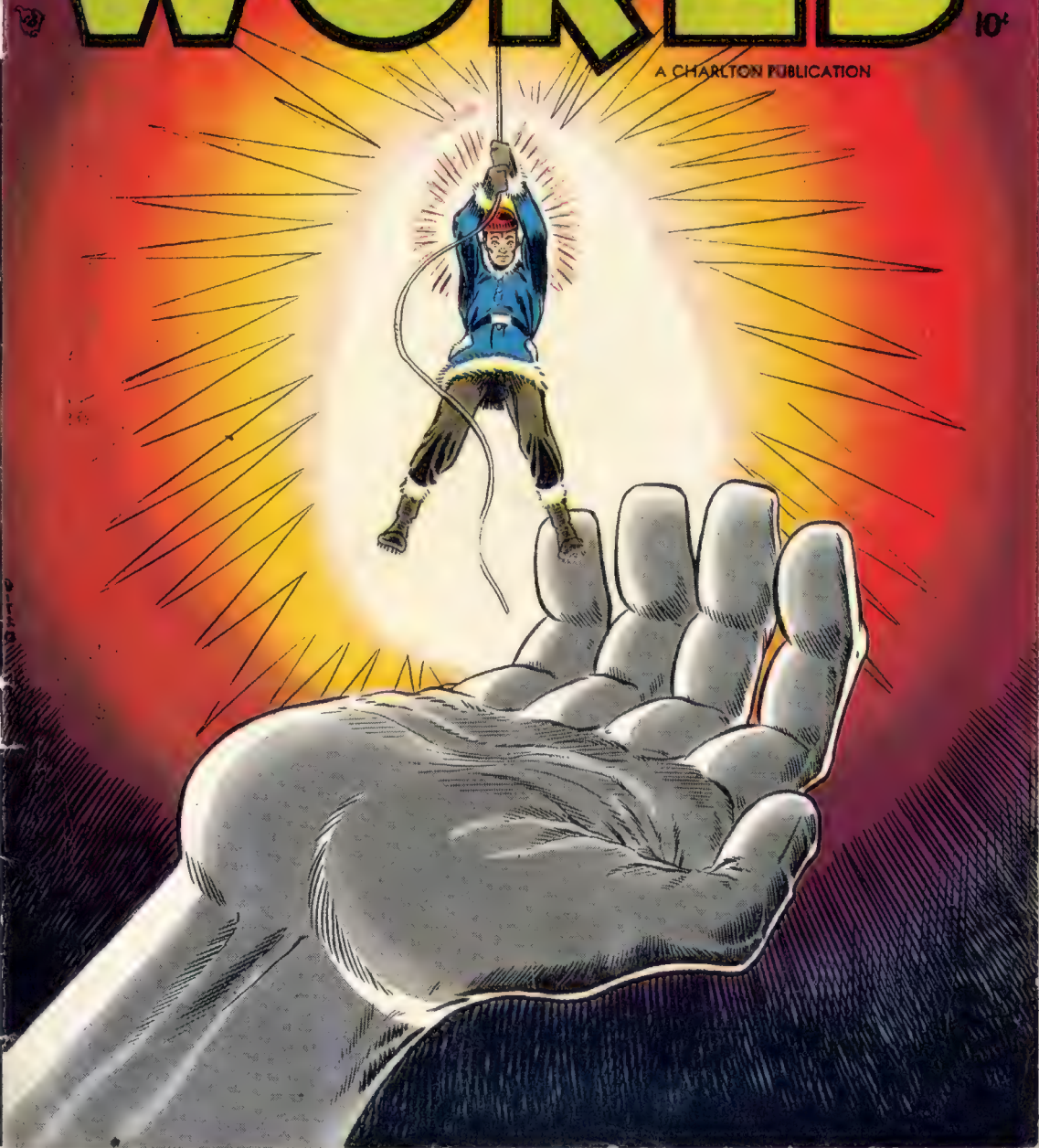
STRANGE STORIES THAT ARE



# OUT OF THIS WORLD

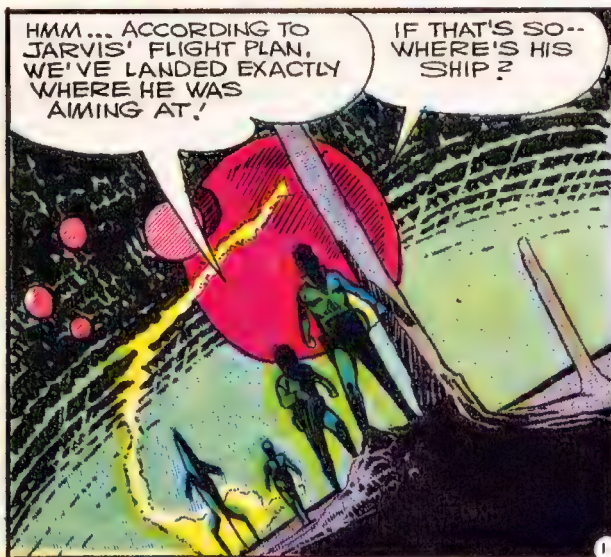
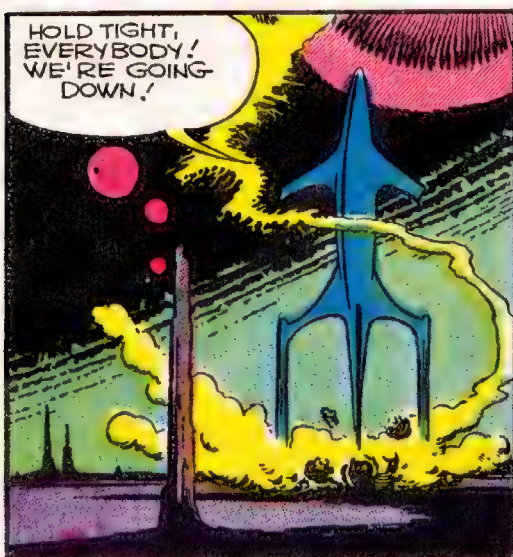
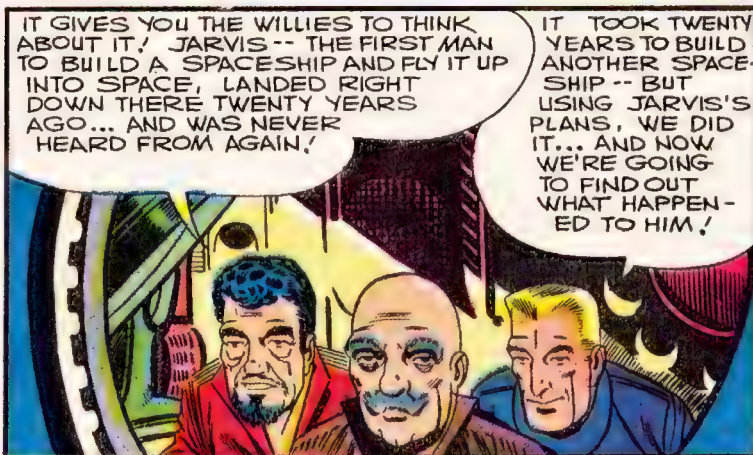
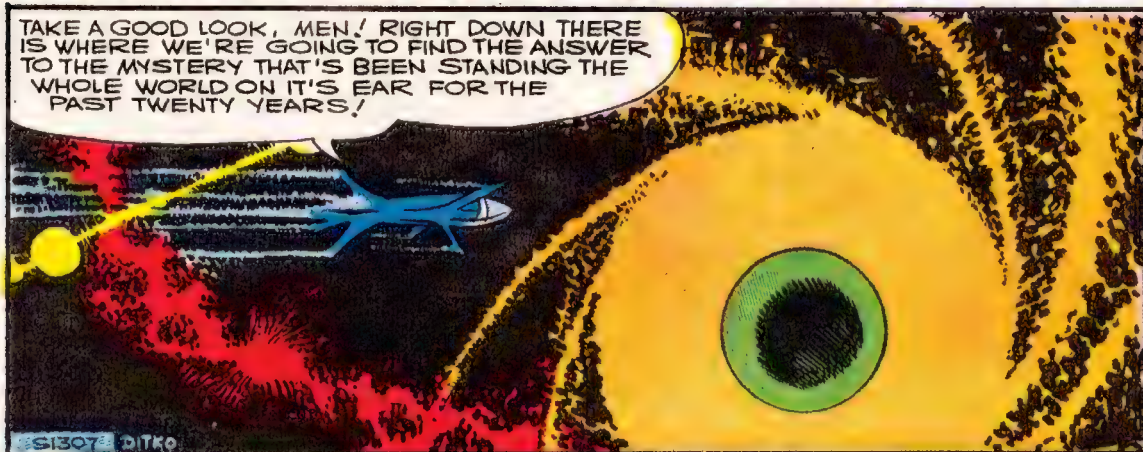
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A CHARLTON PUBLICATION





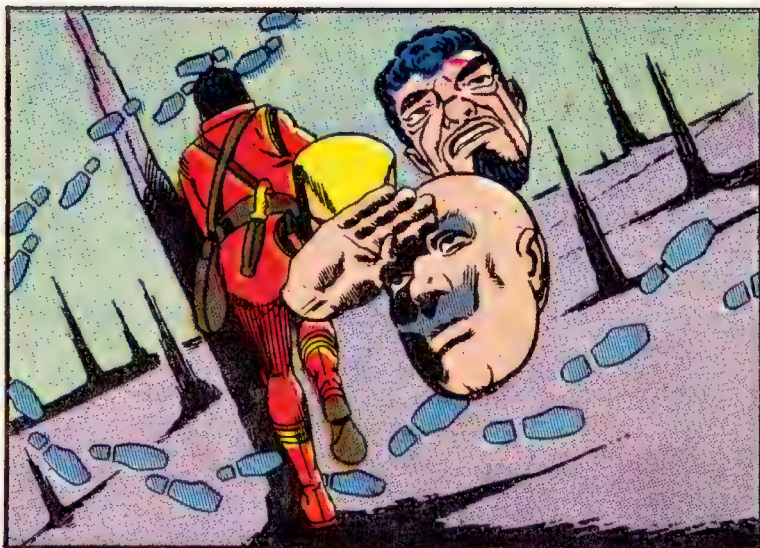
# WHAT HAPPENED?





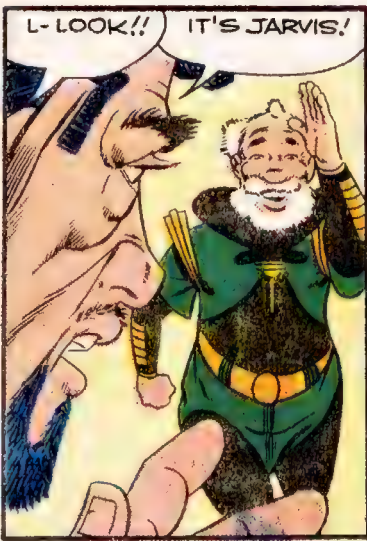


WE'LL FIND IT-- DON'T WORRY! NOW LET'S TEAM UP AND START SEARCHING!



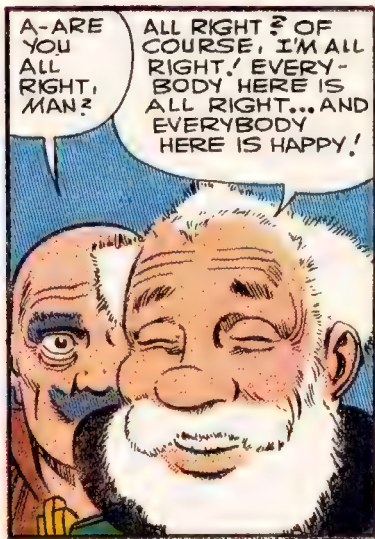
WE'VE GONE OVER EVERY INCH OF THIS SORRY EXCUSE FOR A PLANET-- BUT NO JARVIS AND NO SHIP!

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?



L- LOOK!!

IT'S JARVIS!



A-ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MAN?

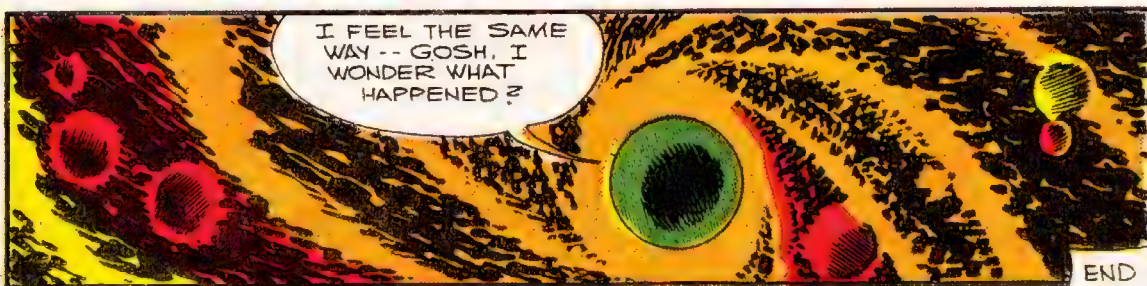
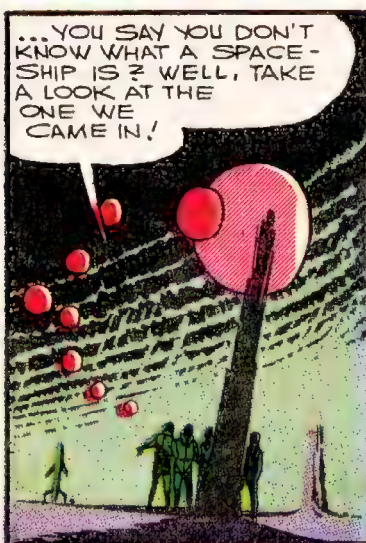
ALL RIGHT? OF COURSE, I'M ALL RIGHT! EVERYBODY HERE IS ALL RIGHT...AND EVERYBODY HERE IS HAPPY!



EVERYBODY? WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT? WE SEARCHED AND DIDN'T SEE A SOUL!

SHH... LET ME TALK TO HIM!





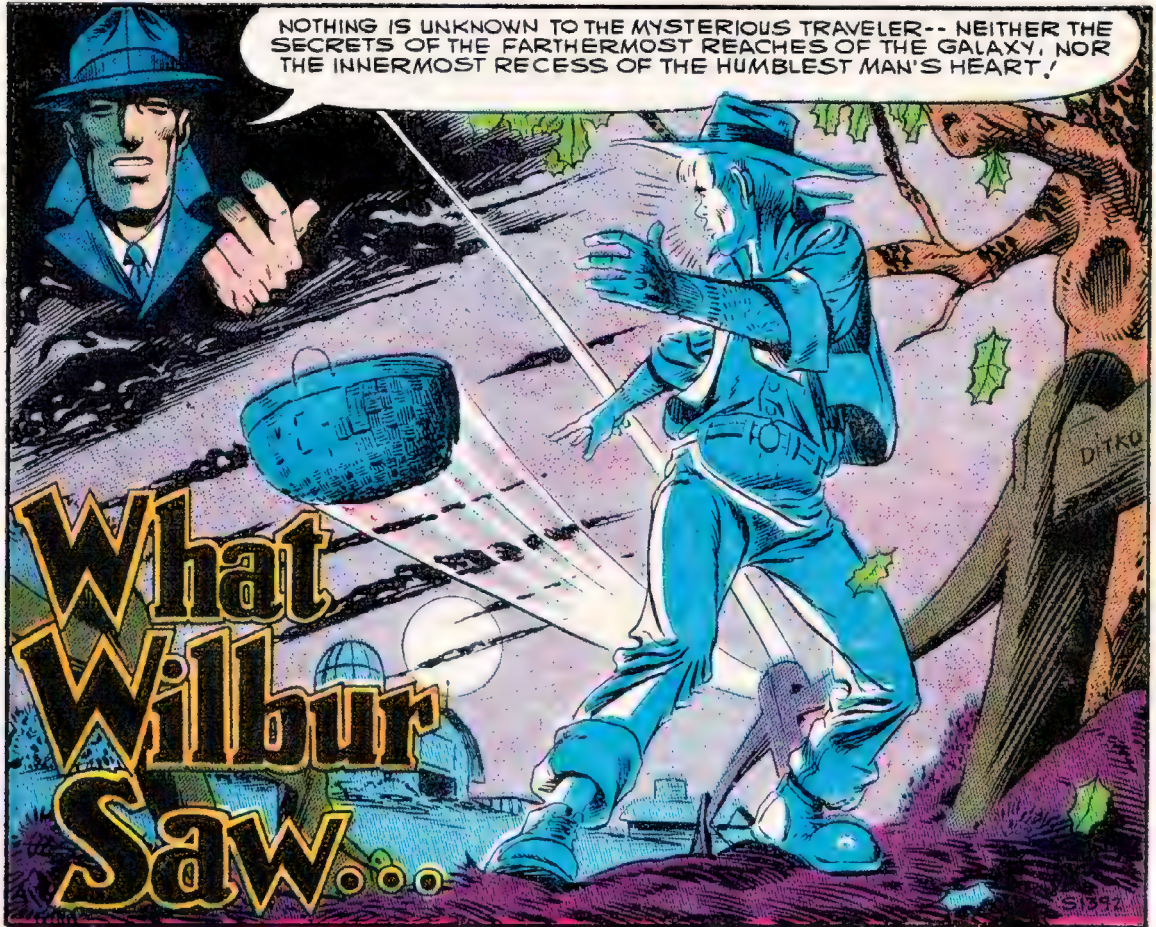


# Tales of the MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER

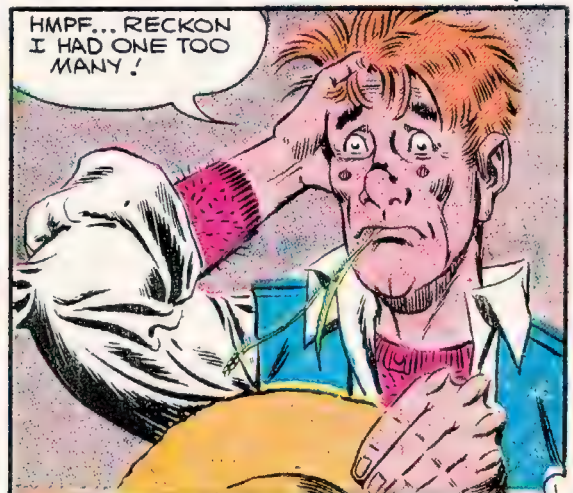


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*Alfred P. Fago* Executive Editor

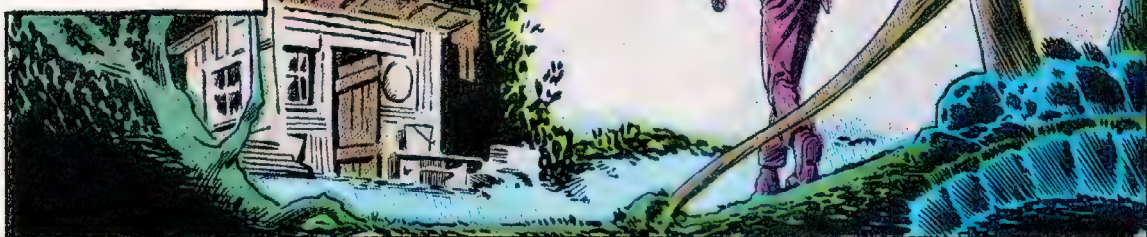


BUT AFTER ONE BRIEF GRIMACE OF SHOCK, WILBUR DEAN MERELY SHRUGGED.

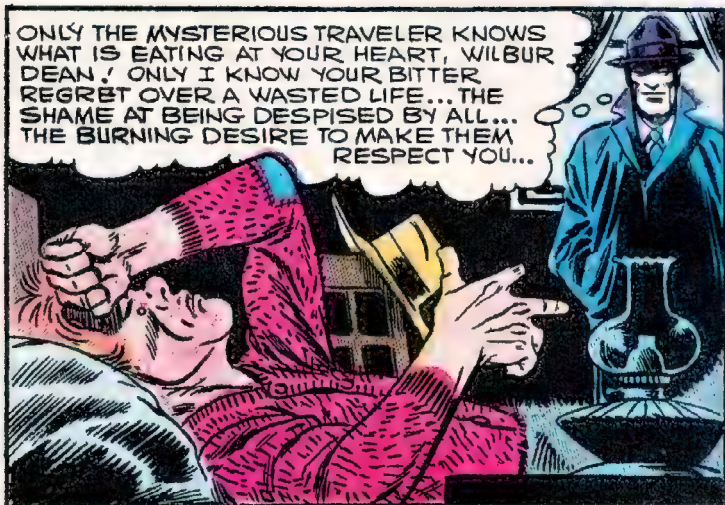




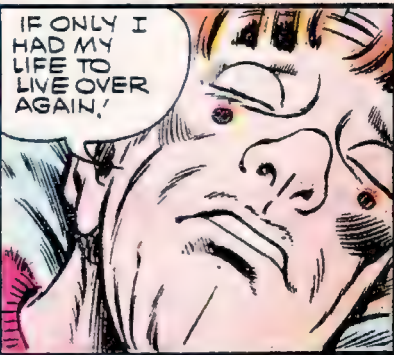
...AND THEN  
SHUFFLED HOME-  
WARD TO THE  
DECREPIT SHACK  
TO FRET AWAY  
ANOTHER  
SLEEPLESS  
NIGHT...



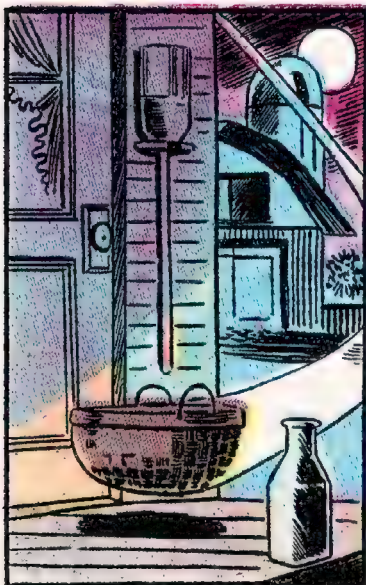
ONLY THE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER KNOWS  
WHAT IS EATING AT YOUR HEART, WILBUR  
DEAN. ONLY I KNOW YOUR BITTER  
REGRET OVER A WASTED LIFE... THE  
SHAME AT BEING DESPISED BY ALL...  
THE BURNING DESIRE TO MAKE THEM  
RESPECT YOU...



... AND THE HOPELESS DESPAIR  
BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT CAN  
NEVER BE! ONLY THE  
MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER  
HEARS YOUR ANGUISHED  
CRY, WILBUR DEAN...



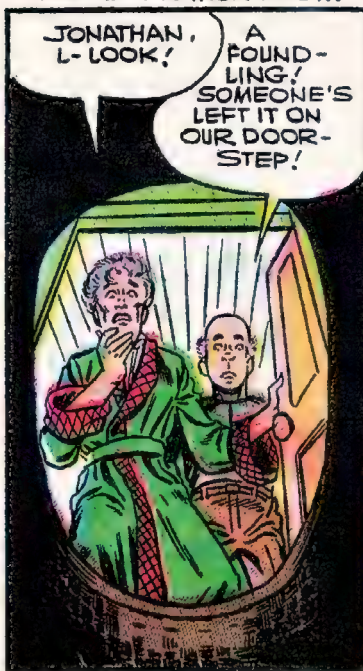
BUT WHAT OF THE FLYING  
BASKET THAT WILBUR HAD  
SEEN, AND THEN IGNORED?  
BEHOLD WHERE IT SET-  
TLED TO REST...



AND IN THE MORNING...

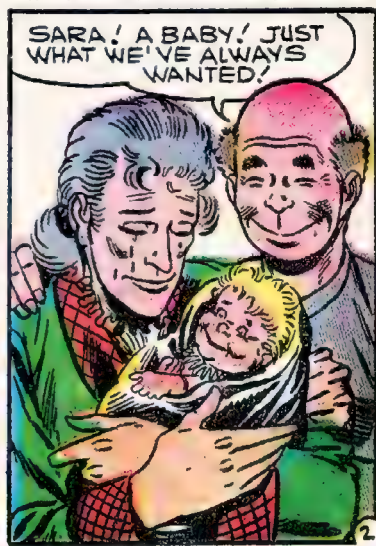
JONATHAN,  
L-LOOK!

A  
FOUND-  
LING!  
SOMEONE'S  
LEFT IT ON  
OUR DOOR-  
STEP!



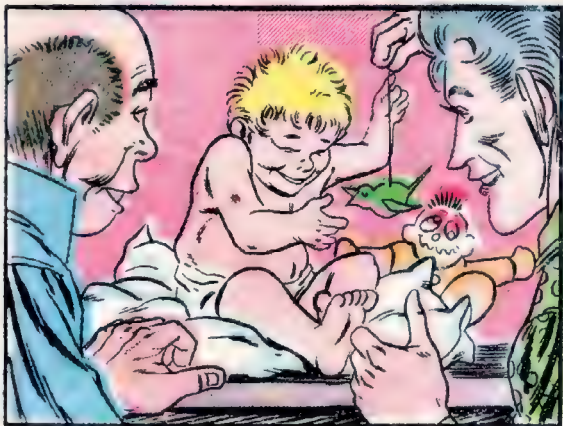
WAS IT SHEER COINCIDENCE  
THAT JONATHAN AND HIS WIFE  
WERE CHILDLESS? THAT  
THEIR HEARTS BOUNDED  
WITH JOY AT THE SIGHT  
OF THE PINK-CHEEKED  
INFANT... WAS IT?

SARA! A BABY! JUST  
WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS  
WANTED!





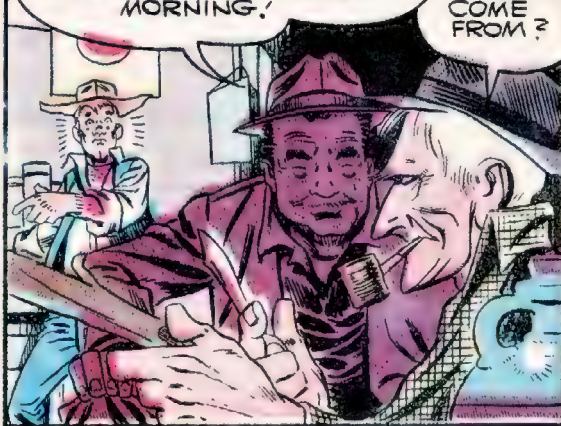
SO THE ELDERLY COUPLE HAD A CHILD OF THEIR OWN AT LAST! AND THEY SHOWERED IT WITH ALL THE PENT-UP LOVE THAT HAD BEEN ACCUMULATING FOR SO LONG INSIDE THEM! ALL WENT WELL...



...UNTIL...

HAVE YE HEARD? SARA AND JONATHAN GOT THEMSELVES A BABY! THEY FOUND IT IN A BASKET LAST TUESDAY MORNING!

HMM... WONDER WHERE IT COULD'VE COME FROM?



WATCH WILBUR CLOSELY! HE IS REMEMBERING NOW--MONDAY NIGHT... STUMBLING ACROSS THE FIELD... THE SUDDEN STARTLED GLIMPSE OF A BASKET SWOOPING DOWN...

HEY!!



WHAT GOT INTO HIM?

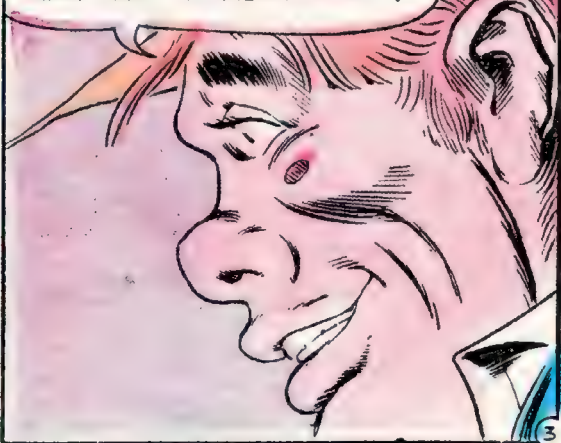
NEVER SAW WILBUR MOVE SO FAST BEFORE!



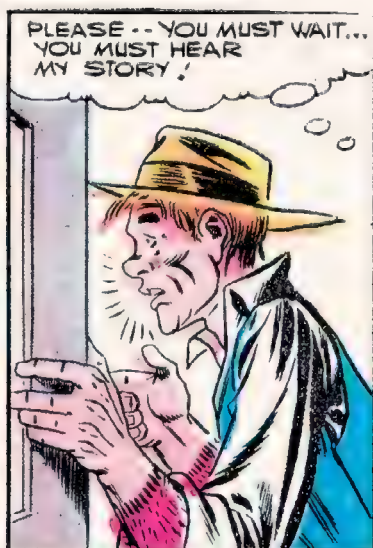
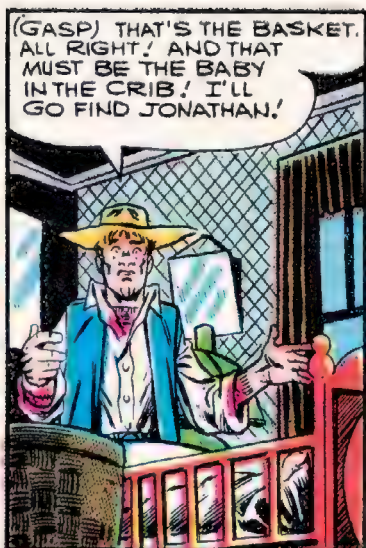
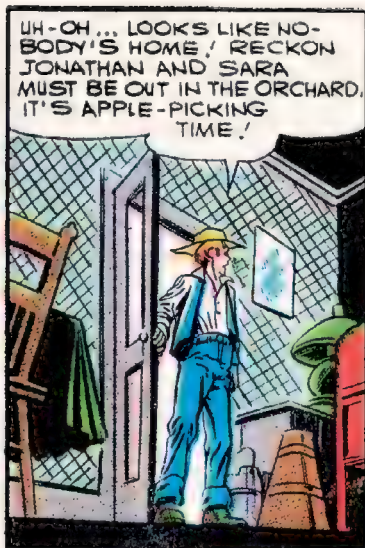
"THE BABY MUST'VE BEEN INSIDE THAT BASKET! I'LL GO TO JONATHAN'S PLACE TO TELL HIM FIRST--AND THEN WHEN I TELL EVERYBODY ELSE WHAT I SAW, THEY'LL STOP AND LISTEN FOR A GOOD LONG SPELL."



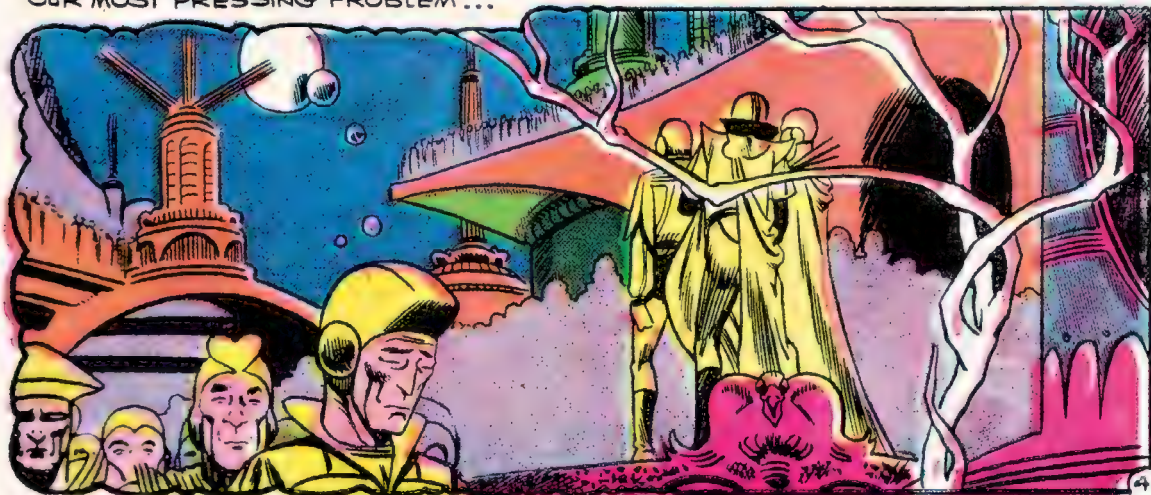
YUP-- FOLKS WILL BE COMING FOR MILES AROUND JUST TO HEAR WHAT WILBUR DEAN, THE MAN THEY'VE ALL BEEN THINKING IS SO WORTHLESS-- SAW LAST MONDAY NIGHT!





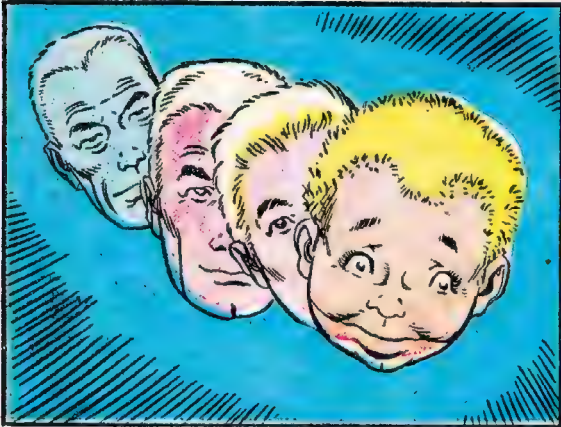


"...I CAME FROM THE PLANET ORMU IN THE OUTERMOST REACHES OF THE GALAXY! COMPARED TO YOUR EARTH, ORMU IS TINY -- AND OVERPOPULATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN OUR MOST PRESSING PROBLEM...

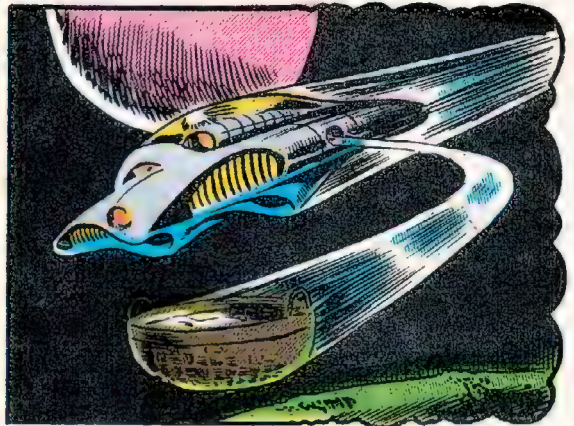




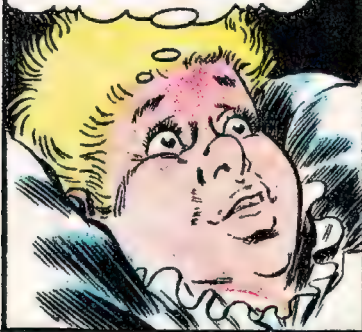
...BUT AT LAST A MEANS HAS BEEN DE-  
VISED OF RELIEVING THE SITUATION! A  
GROWTH-REGRESSOR HAS BEEN DE-  
VELOPED THAT TRANSFORMS ADULT  
ORMUNIAMS INTO INFANTS...



...AND THESE INFANTS ARE TRANSPORTED  
BY SPACECRAFT INTO THE EARTH'S ORBIT--  
AND THEN DISPATCHED BY WHAT APPEARS  
TO BE AN ORDINARY BASKET TO THE DOOR-  
STEP OF CHILDLESS EARTHLING COUPLES!!



...AS THE INFANTS MATURE  
HERE ON EARTH, THEY  
GRADUALLY FORGET THEIR  
TRUE ORIGIN! BUT I STILL  
REMEMBER... I READ  
YOUR MIND AS YOU ENTERED  
THE HOUSE... AND SO I  
KNOW OF THE GREAT  
DANGER...



...FOR IF YOU TELL OTHERS  
WHAT YOU SAW-- THE PLAN  
FOR MITIGATING OVER-  
POPULATION ON ORMU...AND  
THE HAPPINESS OF THE  
EARTHLING COUPLES WHO  
HAVE LONGED SO DES-  
PERATELY FOR CHILDREN,  
WILL BE JEAPORDIZED...

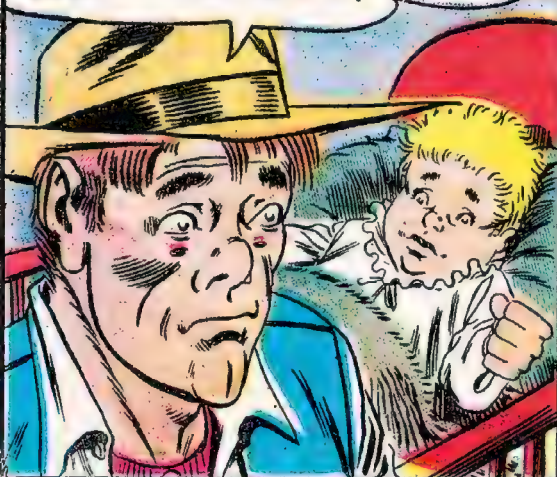


PLEASE!  
I BEG OF  
YOU!  
PROMISE  
NOT TO  
TELL  
OTHERS!

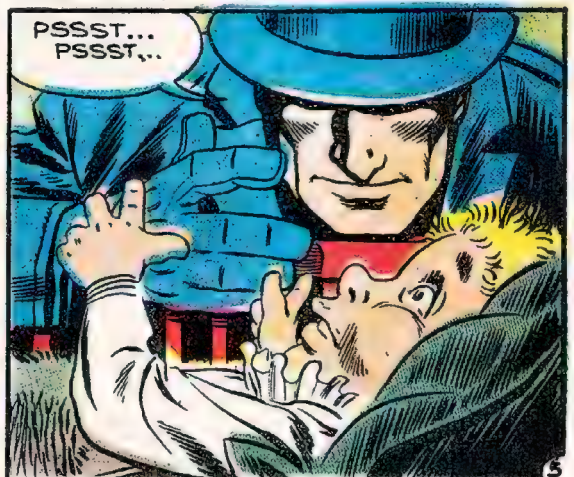
BUT HOW  
CAN WILBUR  
PROMISE?  
HOW CAN HE  
GIVE UP THE  
ONE CHANCE  
HE'S EVER  
HAD IN HIS  
WASTED LIFE TO  
GAIN HIS NEIGH-  
BOR'S ESTEEM?



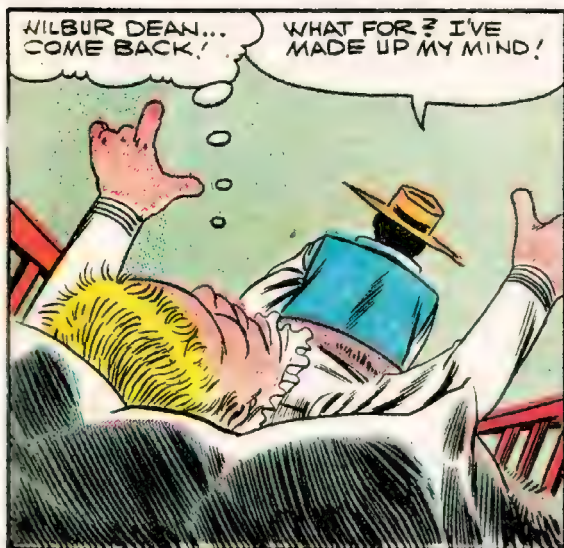
I - I'M SORRY! I'D LIKE TO HELP... BUT  
I HAVE TO TELL FOLKS WHAT I'VE  
SEEN-- I JUST HAVE TO!



ONLY THE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER KNEW  
WHAT MIGHT MAKE WILBUR DEAN CHANGE  
HIS MIND! AND...

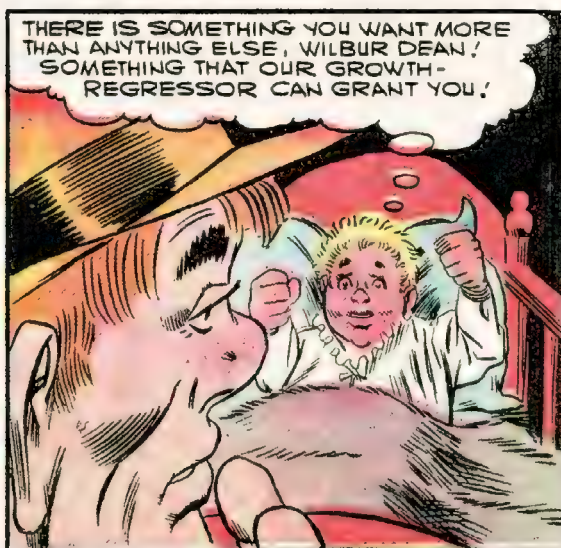






WILBUR DEAN...  
COME BACK!

WHAT FOR? I'VE  
MADE UP MY MIND!



THERE IS SOMETHING YOU WANT MORE  
THAN ANYTHING ELSE, WILBUR DEAN!  
SOMETHING THAT OUR GROWTH-  
REGRESSOR CAN GRANT YOU!



THE INFANT SPEAKS ON! WILL  
HE BE ABLE TO CONVINCE WILBUR  
DEAN? WE SHALL SEE!  
COME--WE HAVE FAR TO  
TRAVEL! AS  
FAR AS...

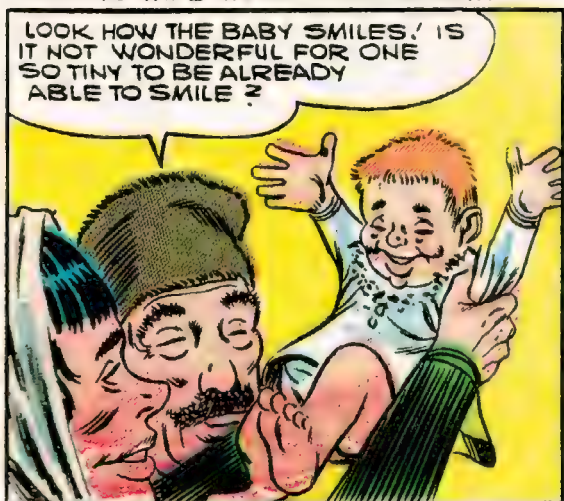


...THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR PLANET!  
IT IS MORNING NOW...

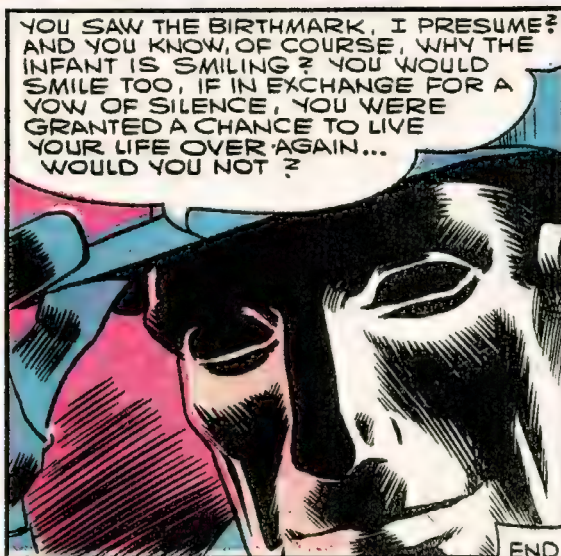
IVAN--  
L-LOOK!

A FOUNDLING!  
SOMEONE HAS  
LEFT IT ON OUR  
DOORSTEP!

WAS IT SHEER COINCIDENCE THAT IVAN  
AND HIS WIFE WERE CHILDLESS...



LOOK HOW THE BABY SMILES! IS  
IT NOT WONDERFUL FOR ONE  
SO TINY TO BE ALREADY  
ABLE TO SMILE?



YOU SAW THE BIRTHMARK, I PRESUME?  
AND YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, WHY THE  
INFANT IS SMILING? YOU WOULD  
SMILE TOO, IF IN EXCHANGE FOR A  
YOW OF SILENCE, YOU WERE  
GRANTED A CHANCE TO LIVE  
YOUR LIFE OVER AGAIN...  
WOULD YOU NOT?

END



# OUT OF THIS WORLD

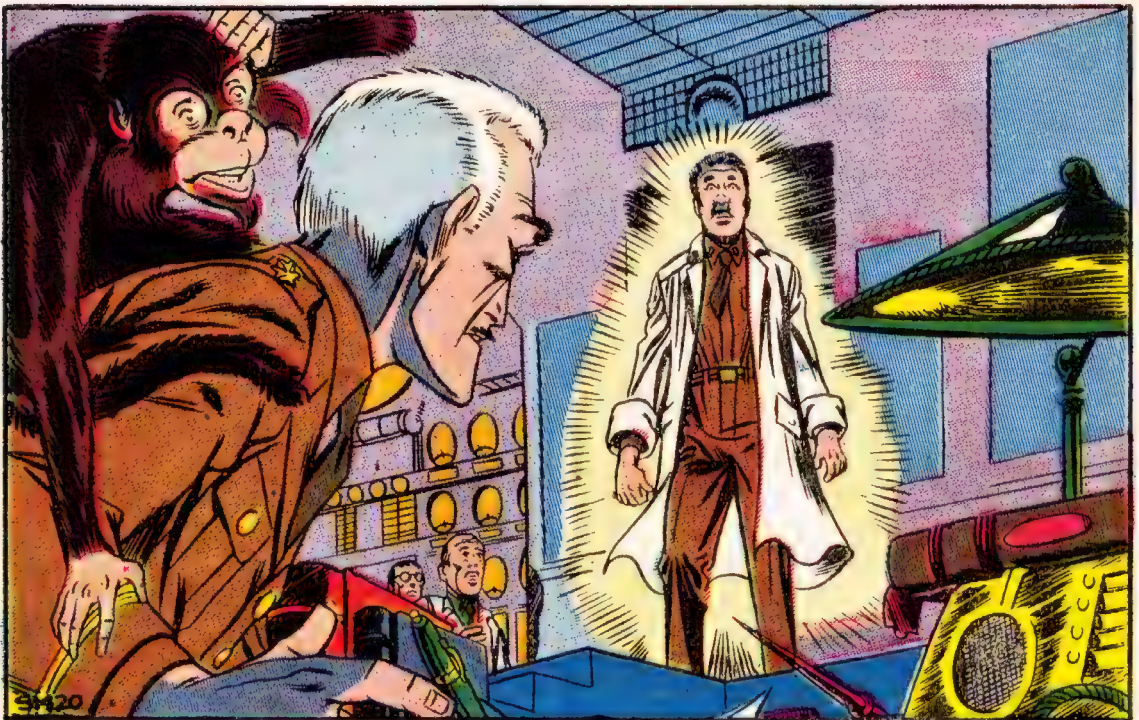


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*Alfred P. Fago* Executive Editor

THEY WERE NO LONGER HUMAN! AND YET EVEN THEN THEY WENT ON! BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS MAN MUST NOT MEDDLE WITH-- I KNOW! I SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO ....

# The SUPERMEN



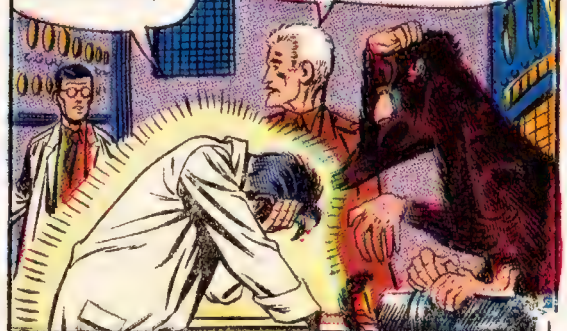
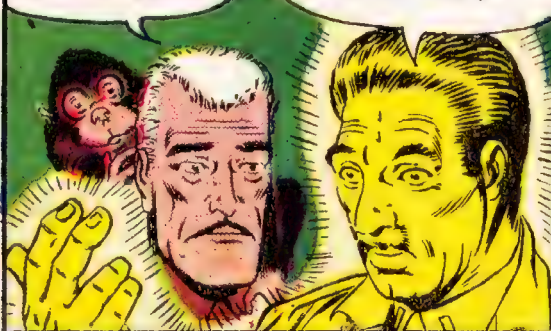
HOW CAN I BEGIN? IT HAS ALL HAPPENED SO QUICKLY! SOMETIMES, IT SEEMS THAT IT BEGAN A CENTURY AGO! BUT IT WAS ONLY LAST WEEK....

GREAT SCOTT! MORGAN-- IS IT YOU?!

YES, MAJOR! WH-WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME?

I WAS WORKING NEAR THE ATOMIC REACTOR AND SUDDENLY, THIS HAPPENED! I-I FEEL AS IF I'M GOING INSANE!

STEADY, YOU'RE FAR FROM INSANE! BUT AS TO WHAT'S MAKING YOU GLOW-- I DON'T KNOW! SOMEONE GET DOCTOR LEWIS!





MORGAN WAS THE FIRST! HE STUMBLED INTO THE CONTROL ROOM, AND...

WELL, DOCTOR?

THE GLOW IS CAUSED BY TOO MUCH EXPOSURE TO ATOMIC RADIATION -- BUT I DON'T SEE HOW OR WHY?



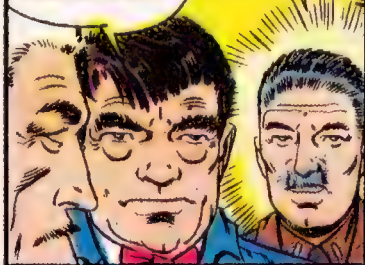
MAJOR, AS A DOCTOR, I'VE BEEN AGAINST THIS EXPERIMENT ALL ALONG! HERE WE ARE, ISOLATED IN THE ROCKIES-- WITH ENOUGH URANIUM TO BUILD A HUNDRED A-BOMBS...

THAT'S OUR JOB, DOCTOR! WE ARE SOLDIERS, EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT!



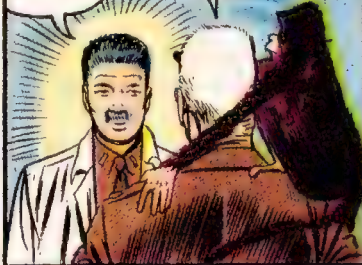
I KNOW! YOU'RE HERE TO EXPERIMENT, TO LEARN WHAT HAPPENS TO THE HUMAN MIND WHEN IT IS EXPOSED TO CONSTANT RADIATION...

BUT ONLY TO CONTROLLED RADIATION! MAJOR, THERE MUST BE A RADIATION LEAK!

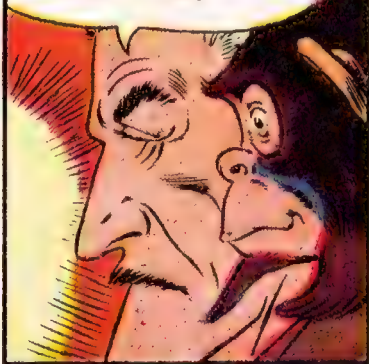


THE DOCTOR IS RIGHT! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

THE DOCTOR IS AGAINST THIS EXPERIMENT! BUT HE'S A MAN OF SCIENCE! HE VOLUNTEERED! YOU DON'T HAVE THAT CHOICE-- YOU'RE A SOLDIER!



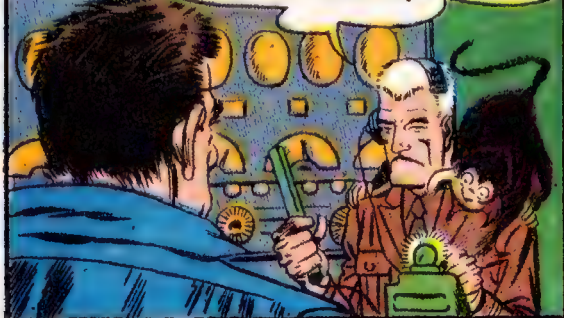
IF THERE'S A LEAK-- WE'LL FIND IT! BUT WE STAY! THE DOCTOR'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU! ONLY DON'T LET ME HEAR ANY MORE TALK OF ABANDONING OUR JOB!



I REMEMBER SO WELL, THAT FIRST DAY-- EVEN THE MAJOR WAS FRIGHTENED, BUT HE HID IT! AFTERWARD, HE LED THE SEARCH PARTY...

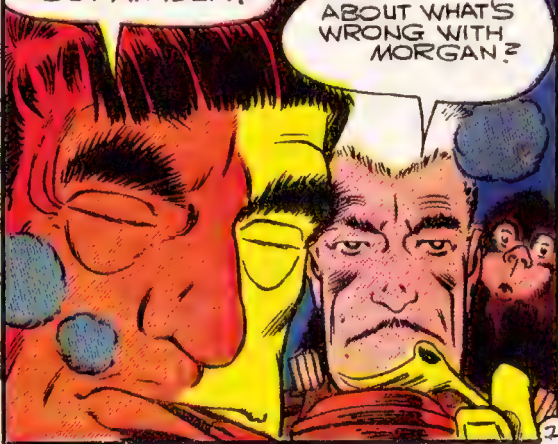
ANY LUCK, MAJOR!

NONE! THE WHOLE AREA IS HOT! WE KNOW THAT! THERE'S A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF RADIATION EVERYWHERE! BUT WE CAN'T FIND A LEAK!

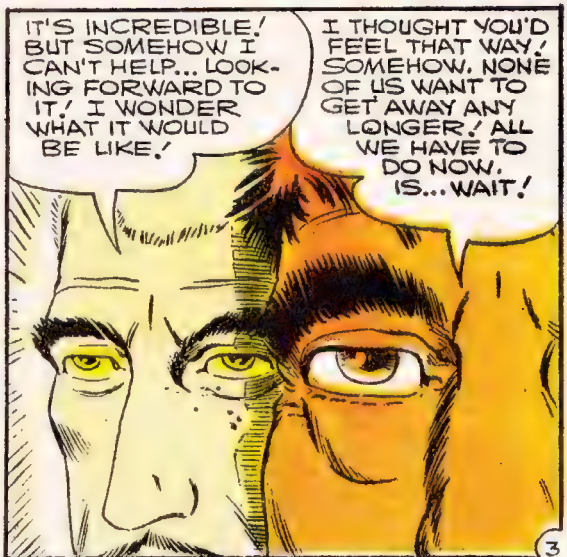
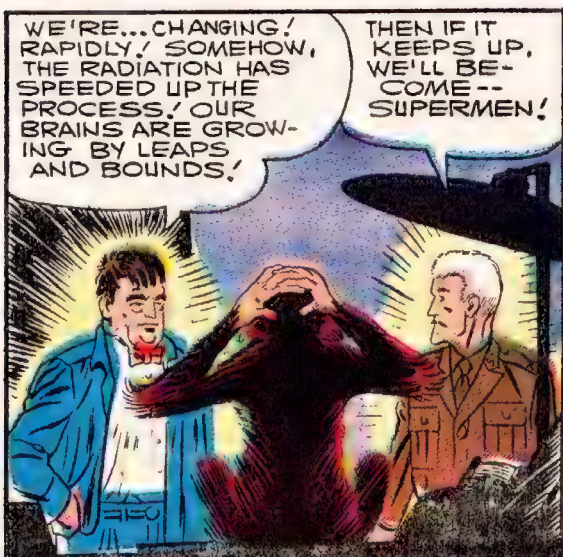
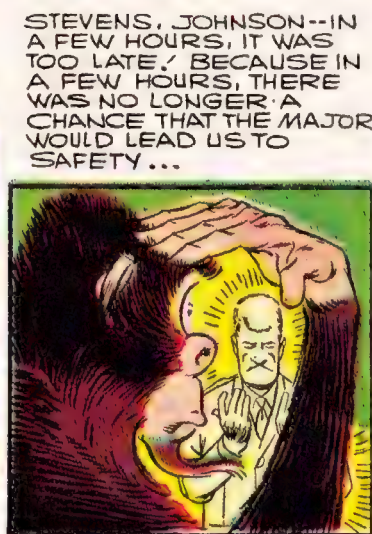
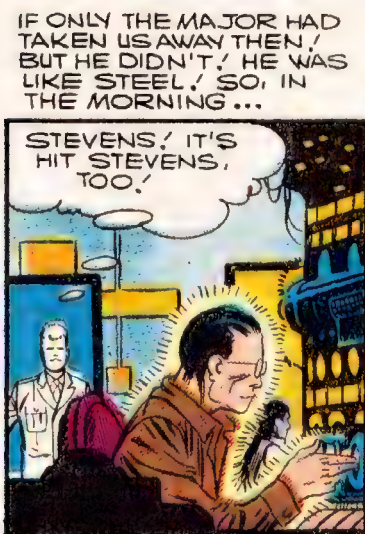


I SEE! I'VE GIVEN MORGAN A SEDATIVE AND PUT HIM TO BED. HE SEEMS HEALTHY ENOUGH, BUT... MAJOR, I'VE GOT AN IDEA!

ABOUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH MORGAN?

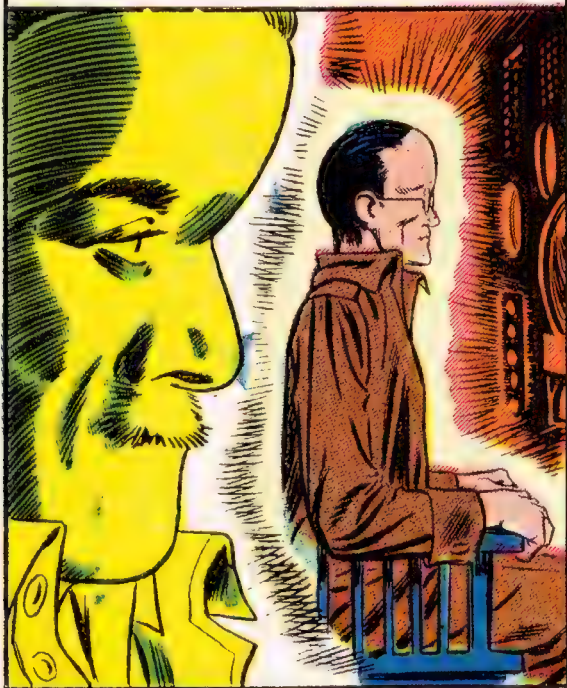




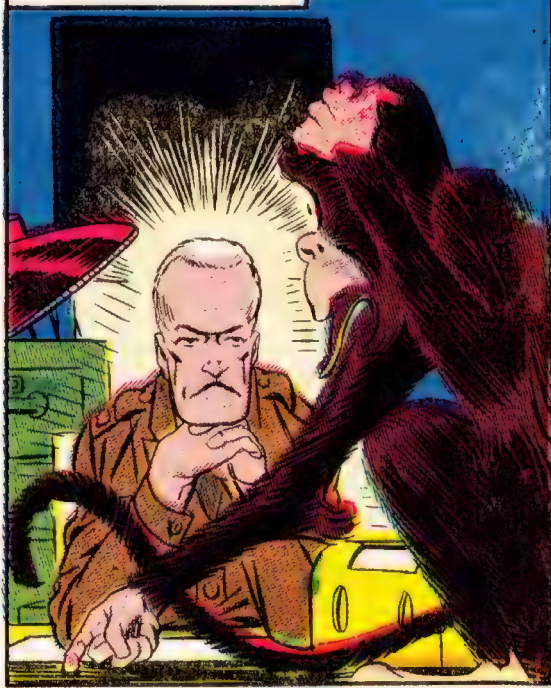




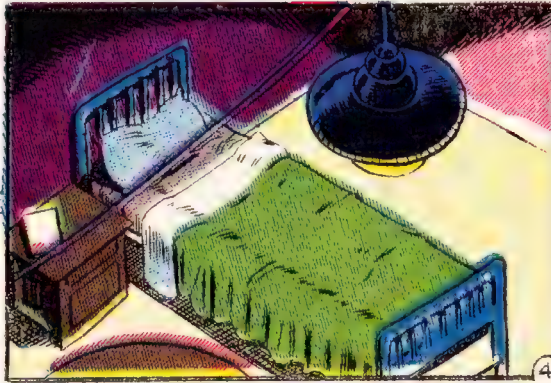
DO YOU UNDERSTAND ? HUMAN EMOTIONS AND FEARS DROPPED AWAY FROM THE MEN, IN A FEW DAYS, THEY DIDN'T EVEN SPEAK TO EACH OTHER...



WHAT IS THE HUMAN BRAIN, ONLY A MACHINE? AND IS THAT WHAT THE MEN BECAME? MACHINES? THINKING MACHINES...?



FOUR DAYS, FIVE--AND THEN THE LAST ACT BEGAN.' AND AGAIN, MORGAN WAS THE FIRST...





MORGAN JUST VANISHED! HE BECAME PURE ENERGY, AND NONE OF THE MEN SEEMED TO CARE! ONLY THE DOCTOR, AT THE END, STILL HAD A SHRED OF HUMAN EMOTION LEFT...

MORGAN'S GONE! AND I KNOW WHY-- WE ALL DO! HE'S MERGED WITH INFINITY! JUST AS THE REST OF US WILL!



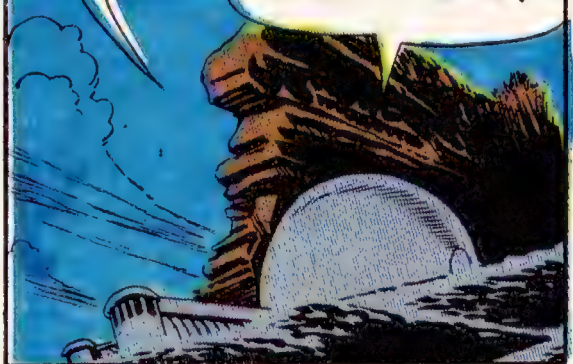
UNLESS WE LEAVE HERE, NOW! WHILE THERE'S STILL A CHANCE!

A CHANCE TO BE JUST HUMANS AGAIN, DOCTOR? IS THAT WHAT YOU REALLY WANT? MY MIND TELLS ME DIFFERENTLY!



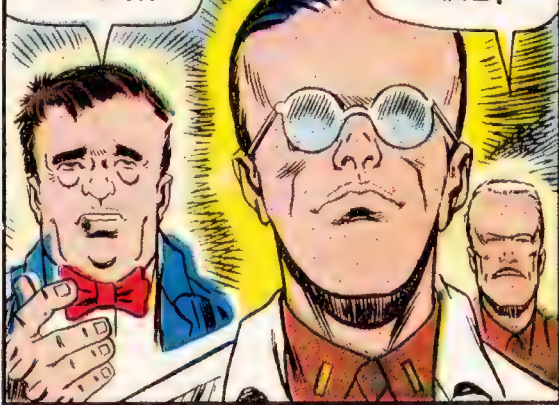
WOULD YOU REALLY GIVE UP WHAT YOU HAVE NOW-- JUST TO BE A MAN AGAIN?

YES! I DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP WHAT WE'VE STUMBLED ONTO! BUT REASON TELLS ME THAT IT'S WRONG! MAJOR, GIVE THE ORDER, PLEASE!



YOU MEN--YOU'RE STILL WHAT YOU WERE--OR YOU CAN BE! LISTEN TO ME...

THEY WON'T LISTEN, DOCTOR-- AND IN A LITTLE WHILE, YOU WON'T CARE!

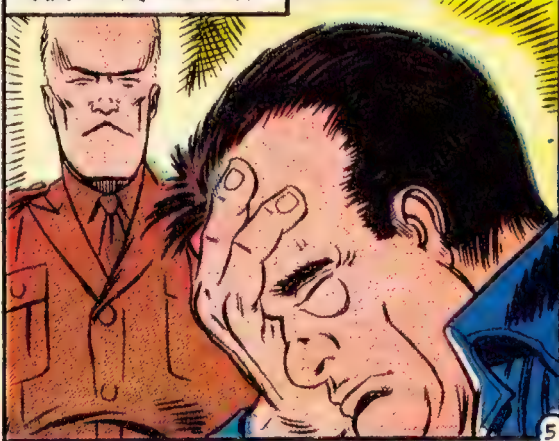


SIT DOWN, DOCTOR-- AND WAIT!

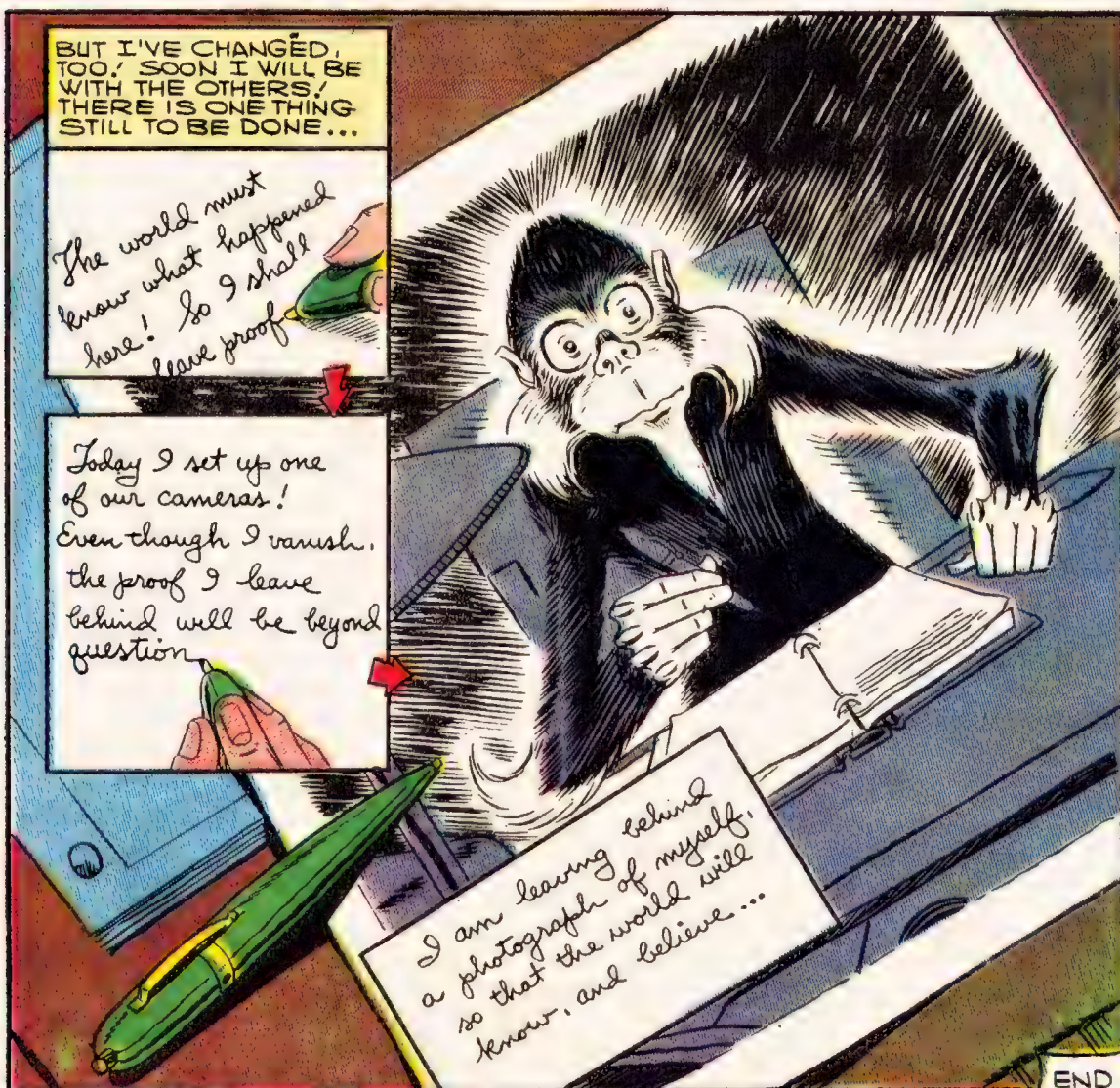
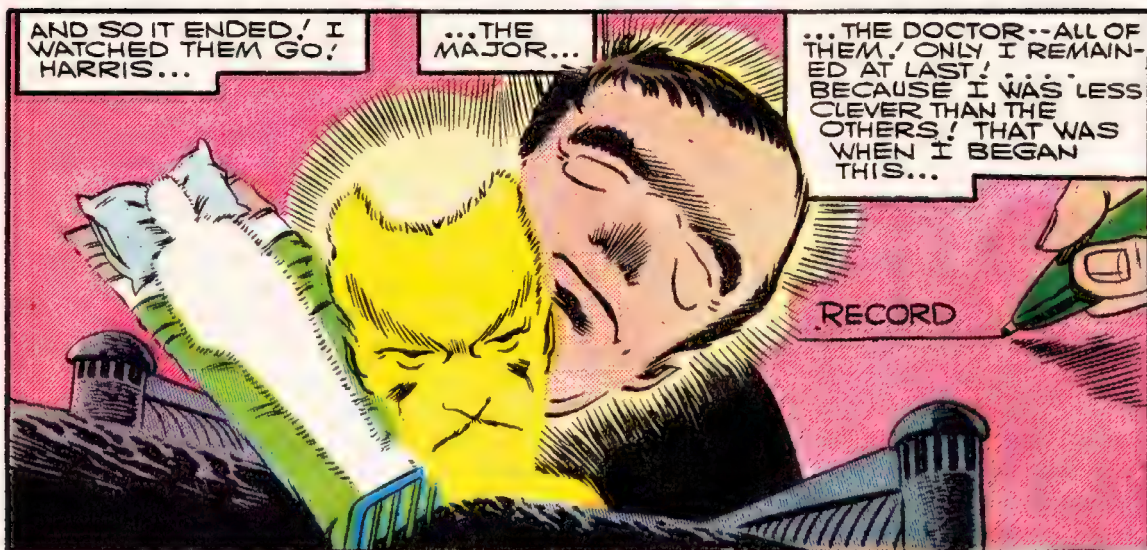
**NO!  
NO!**



THE DOCTOR STRUGGLED! BUT IT WAS NO USE! INCREDIBLE FORCE FLOWED BETWEEN HIM AND THE MAJOR AS THEY MATCHED WILLS! BUT THE MAJOR WON...









OUT OF THIS WORLD

STRANGE STORIES THAT ARE

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

No 4

# OUT OF THIS WORLD

10¢

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



WERE THEY REALLY MEN? ALL THAT WAS  
KNOWN WAS THAT THEY HAD COME  
"FROM ALL OUR DARKROOMS"



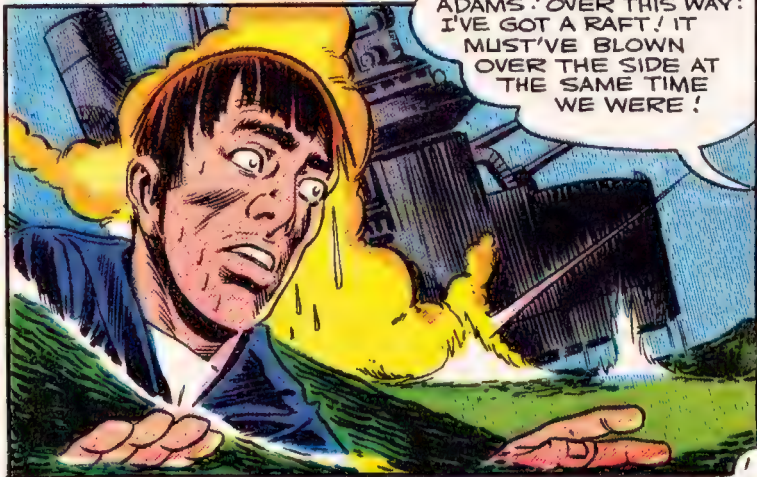
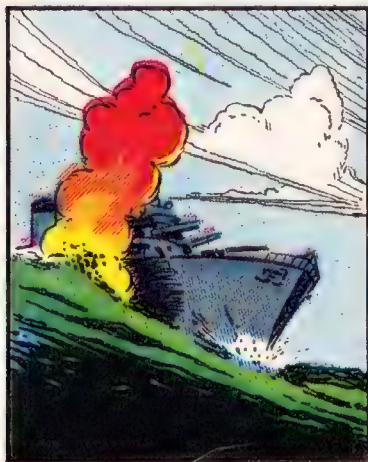
PERHAPS IT WAS ALL A DREAM! PERHAPS CARL ADAMS AND FRANK SAWYER ONLY IMAGINED IT. BUT IF THAT'S TRUE -- WHY IS IT THAT NO ONE HAS EVER SOLVED THE RIDDLE OF WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO THE

# FLYING DUTCHMAN

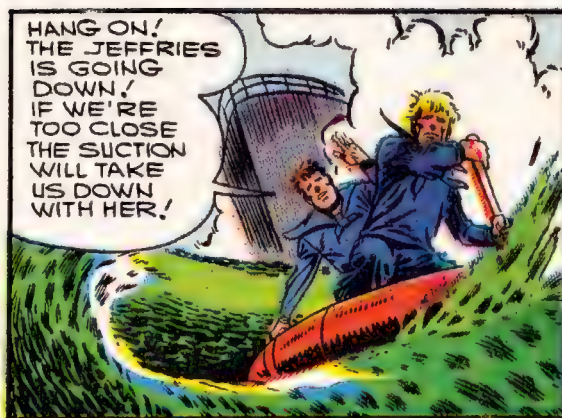
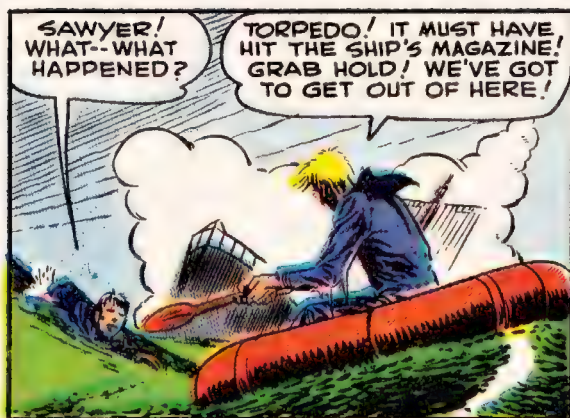


ONE THING IS CERTAIN. THE BEGINNING WAS PART OF A PATTERN OF WAR --- SUDDEN--AND VIOLENT!

SOMEWHERE IN THE ATLANTIC, FIRE AND FLAME TORE THE HEART OUT OF AN AMERICAN DESTROYER--- AND THE INCREDIBLE STORY BEGAN---

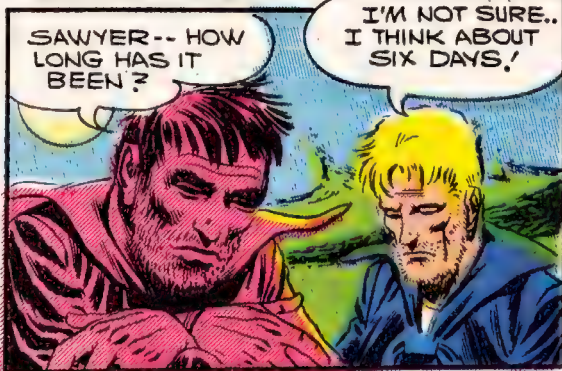
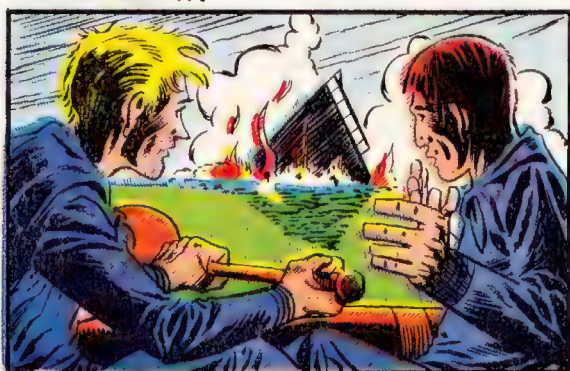




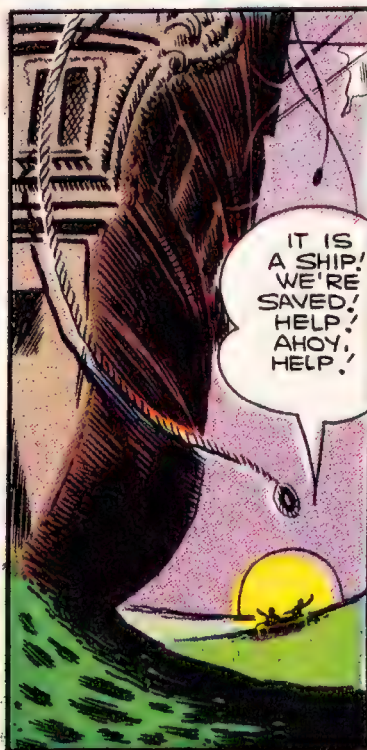


TWO MEN, AND A TINY RAFT! THAT WAS THE GRIM BEGINNING! TWO DAZED MEN, A RAFT, AND A BLAZING, HELP-LESS HULK...

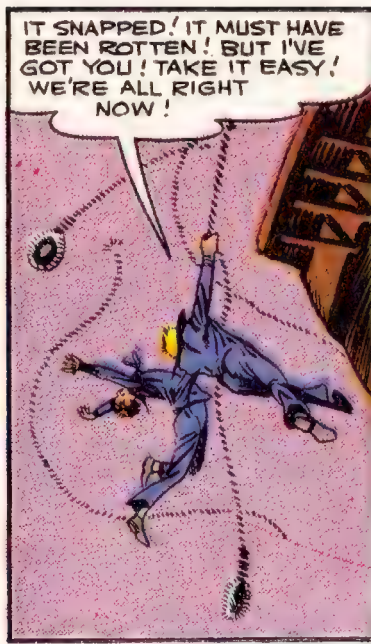
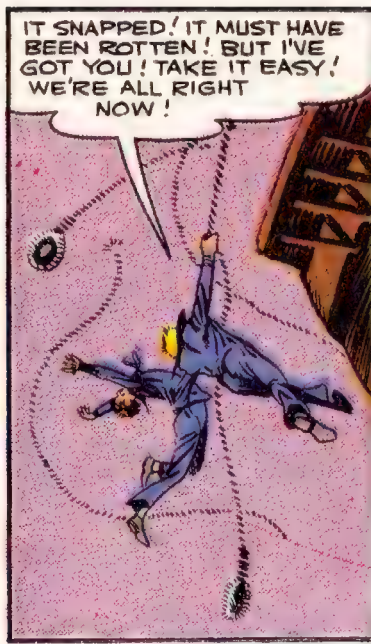
TWO MEN, A HULK THAT SLID BENEATH THE SEA, AND THEN-- EMPTINESS! NIGHTS OF BITING, ACHING COLD! DAYS OF BURNING THIRST...



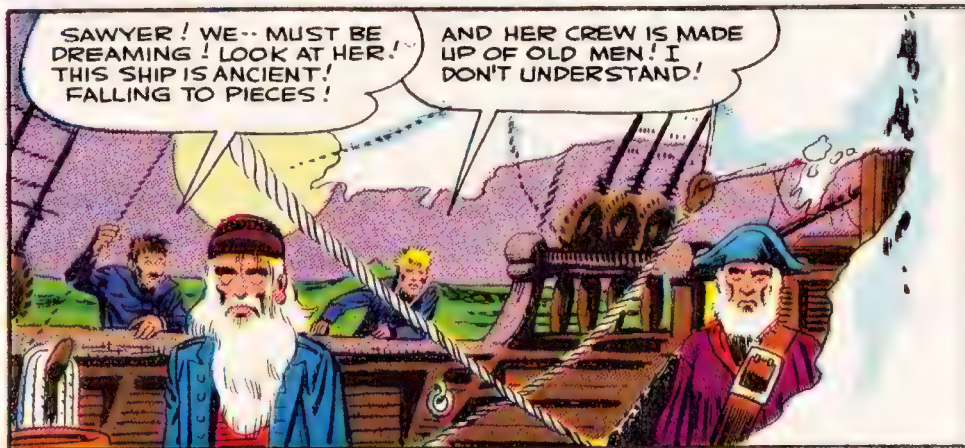
SIX DAYS OF DESPAIR, SIX NIGHTS OF HOPELESS-NESS! ALMOST, CARL ADAMS AND FRANK SAWYER GAVE UP-- BUT ON THE SIXTH NIGHT, THERE WAS THE SHIP...



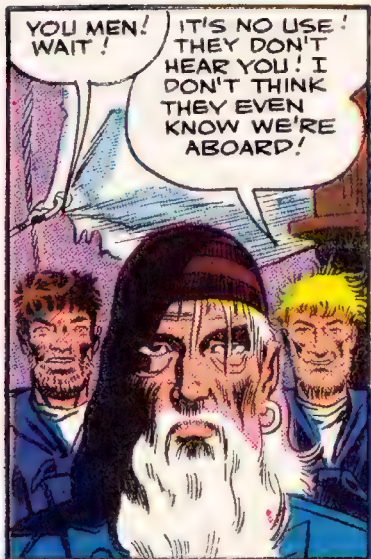




ALL RIGHT ?  
IF ONLY  
SAWYER  
AND ADAMS  
HAD  
STOPPED  
TO WONDER  
ABOUT THE  
ROTTEN  
LINE . BUT  
THEY DID  
NOT . NOT  
UNTIL ---  
LATER !



AND HER CREW IS MADE  
UP OF OLD MEN ! I  
DON'T UNDERSTAND !

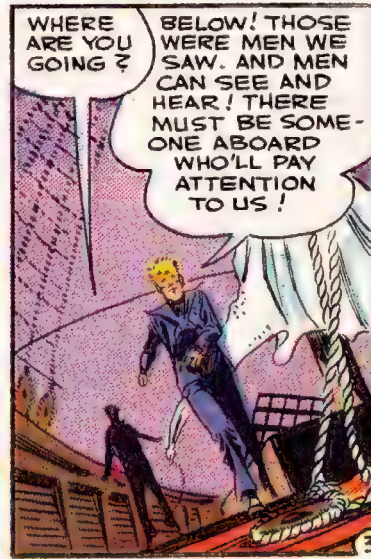


IT'S NO USE !  
THEY DON'T  
HEAR YOU ! I  
DON'T THINK  
THEY EVEN  
KNOW WE'RE  
ABOARD !



IT'S LIKE A  
NIGHTMARE !  
DID YOU SEE  
THEIR  
CLOTHES ?  
THIS SHIP  
MUST BE  
HUNDREDS  
OF YEARS  
OLD !

I KNOW . BUT  
THERE MUST  
BE SOME  
REASON !  
THINGS LIKE  
THIS JUST-  
JUST DON'T  
HAPPEN  
IN THE  
TWENTIETH  
CENTURY !

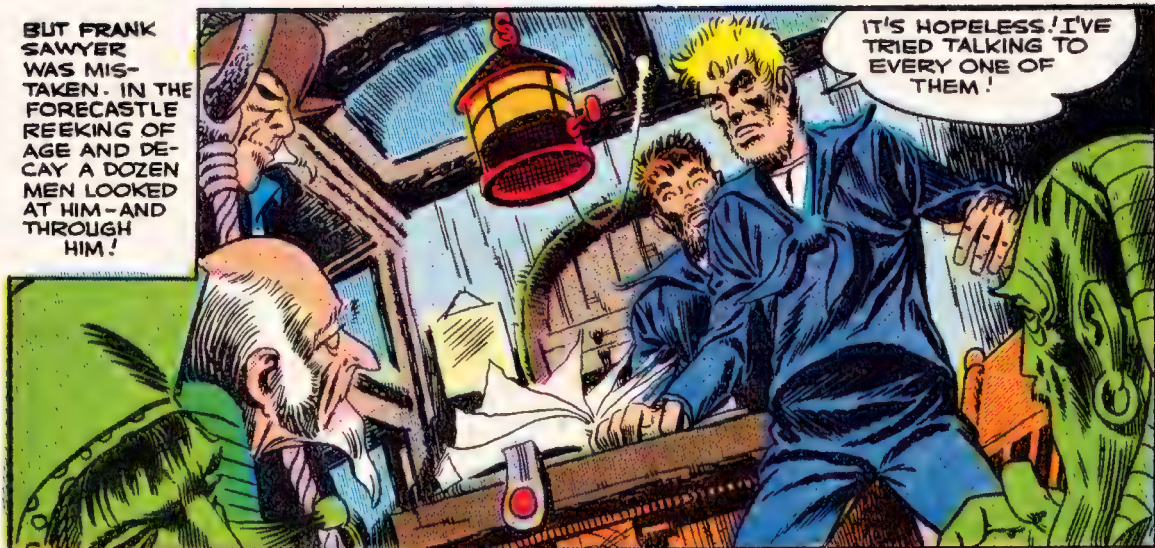


WHERE  
ARE YOU  
GOING ?

BELOW ! THOSE  
WERE MEN WE  
SAW . AND MEN  
CAN SEE AND  
HEAR ! THERE  
MUST BE SOME-  
ONE ABOARD  
WHO'LL PAY  
ATTENTION  
TO US !

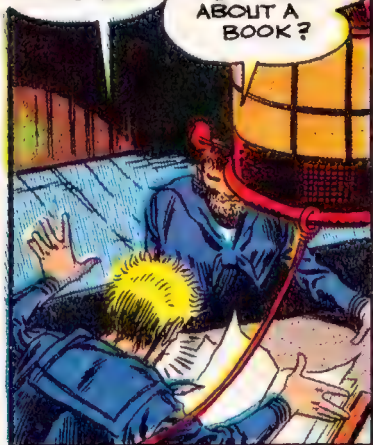


BUT FRANK SAWYER WAS MIS-TAKEN. IN THE FORECASTLE REEKING OF AGE AND DECAY MEN LOOKED AT HIM-AND THROUGH HIM!



NO--NO-- THAT BOOK! IT--IT ISN'T POSSIBLE!

SAWYER! WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S SO TERRIBLE ABOUT A BOOK?



LOOK AT IT FOR YOURSELF! IT'S PRINTED IN DUTCH!

SO SHE'S A DUTCH SHIP! THAT DOESN'T TELL US ANYTHING!

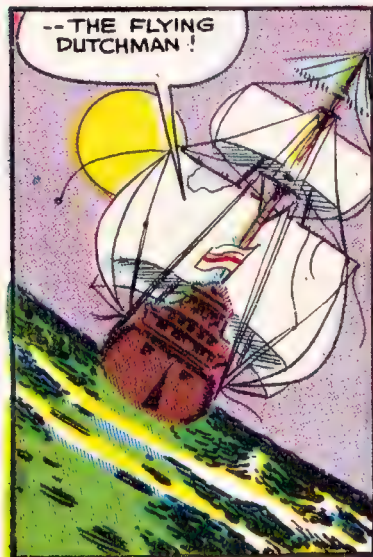


OR--DOES IT? YOU CAN'T MEAN WHAT I THINK YOU MEAN! YOU CAN'T BELIEVE-- THAT!

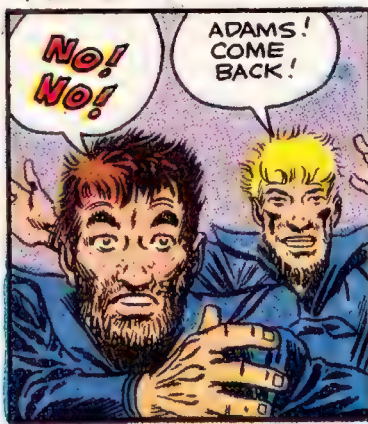
WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO BELIEVE! LOOK AROUND YOU! ADAMS, WE--WE'RE ABOARD--



--THE FLYING DUTCHMAN!



THE FLYING DUTCHMAN! A SHIP DOOMED TO SAIL FOREVER ON AN ENDLESS SEA. THAT WAS WHEN ADAMS BROKE, WHEN THE BLACK PANIC ENGULFED HIM!

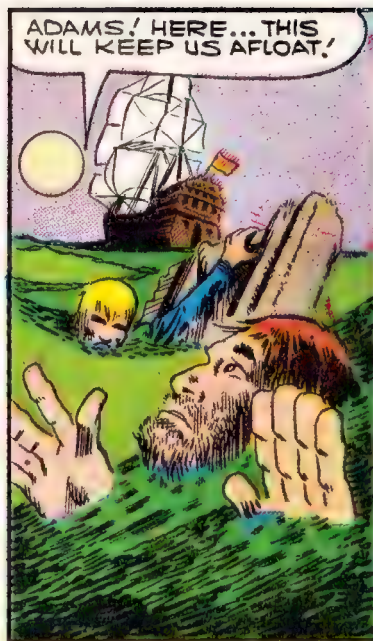


DON'T BE A FOOL! YOU WON'T HAVE A CHANCE IF YOU GO OVER THE SIDE!

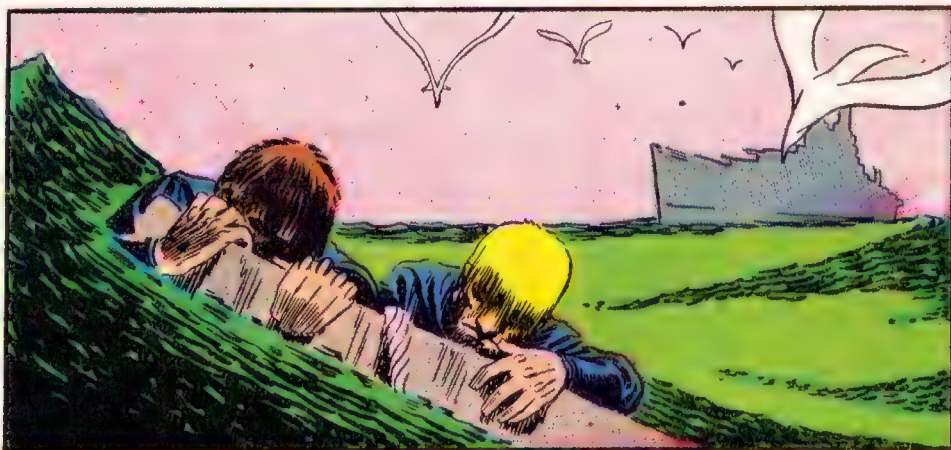
MAYBE NOT! I'D RATHER DROWN THAN GO ON SAILING-- FOREVER! LET ME GO!



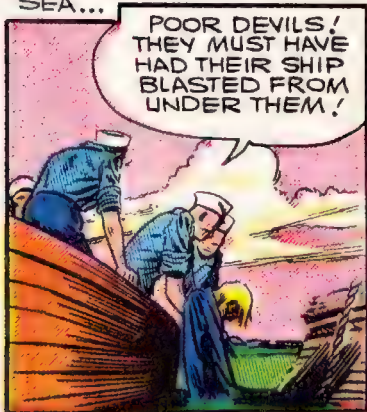




AFTER THAT, WHO CAN SAY HOW LONG FRANK SAWYER AND CARL ADAMS ENDURED THE WAVES? NO ONE! BUT THE END OF THE STORY, AT LEAST, IS KNOWN...



IN THE END, A SMALL MIRACLE HAPPENED. SOMEHOW, A LOOKOUT ABOARD A NAVY CRUISER SIGHTED THE TWO TINY SPECKS BOBBING IN THE SEA...

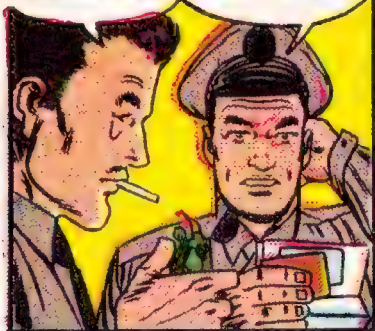


FRANK SAWYER AND CARL ADAMS WERE CARRIED TO A SPOTLESS SHIP'S SEA BAY AND STRIPPED OF THEIR SOAKED UNIFORMS...





FROM THE PAPERS, THEY SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PART OF THE CREW OF A DESTROYER. THE JEFFRIES!



BUT THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE. I'VE HEARD OF THE JEFFRIES! SHE WAS TORPEDOED! HOW DID THEY STAY ALIVE?

WHY, BY CLINGING TO A PIECE OF WOOD, OF COURSE! IS SOMETHING WRONG?



APPARENTLY YOU DIDN'T LOOK CLOSELY AT THESE, DOCTOR. IT SEEMS ADAMS WAS TWENTY-ONE AND SAWYER WAS TWENTY-TWO!

SO? DO YOU STILL THINK THEY'VE BEEN IN THE WATER SINCE THE JEFFRIES WAS TORPEDOED, DOCTOR?



OF COURSE! YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THEY WERE ON THE FLYING DUTCHMAN!



NO-- AND YET I'VE HEARD OF THE JEFFRIES. SHE SANK IN THESE VERY WATERS!

THAT WAS LONG AGO! LEGENDS SAY THAT ABOARD THE FLYING DUTCHMAN, 40 OF OUR YEARS WOULD BE ONLY A MOMENT!

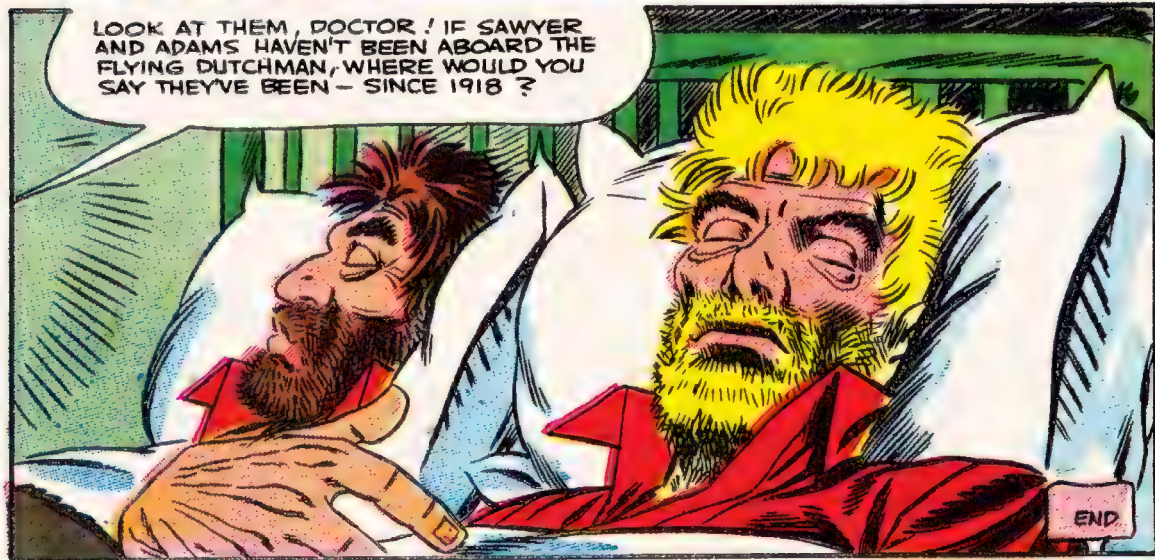


THE JEFFRIES WAS SUNK AND WE PICKED UP TWO SURVIVORS! WHAT HAVE YEARS GOT TO DO WITH IT?

I'D SAY THEY HAD EVERYTHING TO DO WITH IT, DOCTOR! YOU SEE THE JEFFRIES WAS SUNK DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR!



LOOK AT THEM, DOCTOR! IF SAWYER AND ADAMS HAVEN'T BEEN ABOARD THE FLYING DUTCHMAN, WHERE WOULD YOU SAY THEY'VE BEEN - SINCE 1918?



END





STRANGE  
SUSPENSE STORIES

No 32



# STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

10¢

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



S. DITKO

THROUGH THE  
PAINTING INTO  
"A WORLD OF HIS  
OWN"



# STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

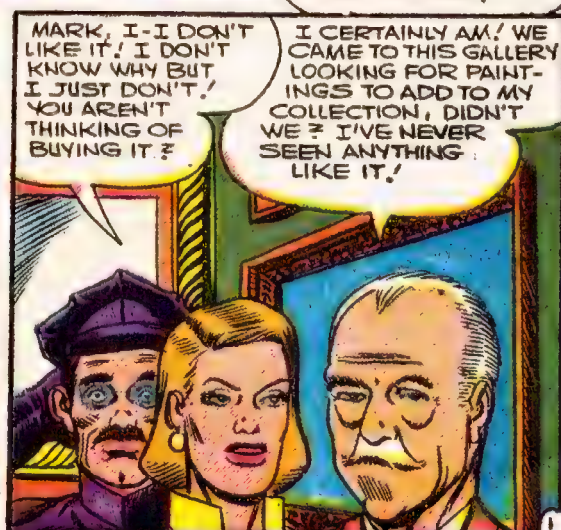
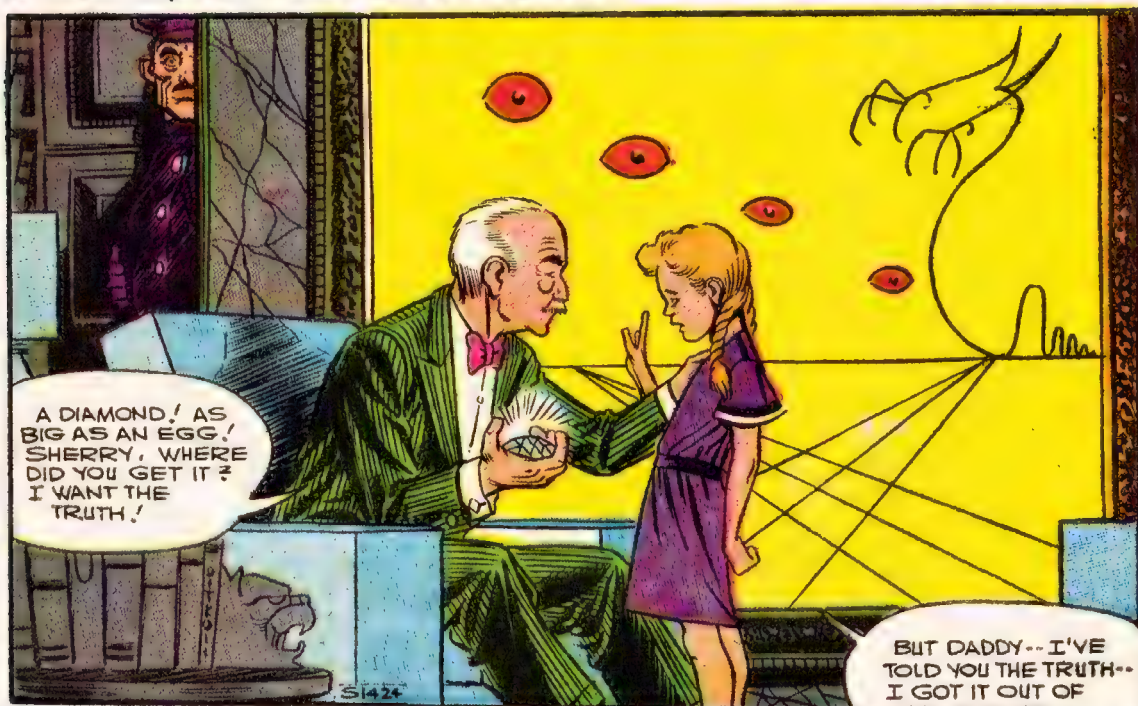


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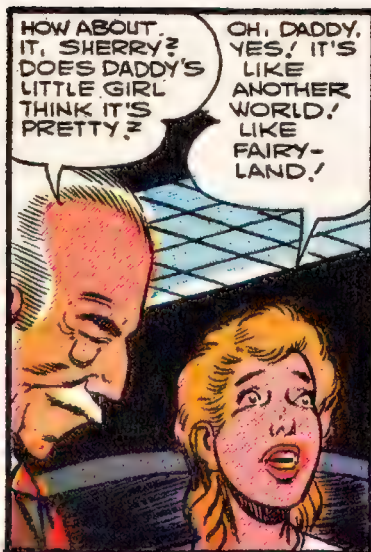
*Alfred P. Fago* Executive Editor

HENDRIX HAD STUMBLED ONTO SOMETHING WHICH COULD MAKE HIM THE RICHEST MAN ON EARTH. BUT HE NEVER EXPECTED TO BE SO RICH THAT HE WOULD HAVE ....

## A WORLD OF HIS OWN







HOW ABOUT IT, SHERRY? DOES DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL THINK IT'S PRETTY?

OH, DADDY, YES! IT'S LIKE ANOTHER WORLD! LIKE FAIRYLAND!



FAIRYLAND? NO, THE PAINTING WAS NOT A PAINTING OF FAIRYLAND-- BUT SHERRY HARRIS WAS HALF RIGHT! ONLY, NO ONE KNEW IT, THEN...

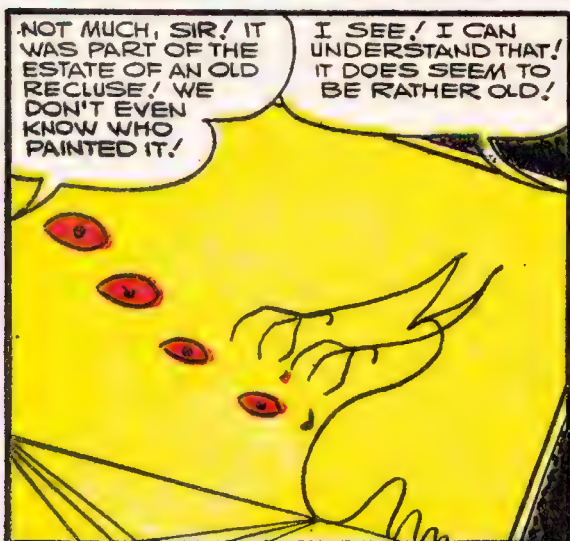
PLEASE, MARK, DON'T BUY IT! IT-- IT MAKES ME FEEL COLD, SOMEHOW!

NONSENSE! SHERRY LIKES IT, AND SO DO I! SO IT'S SETTLED!



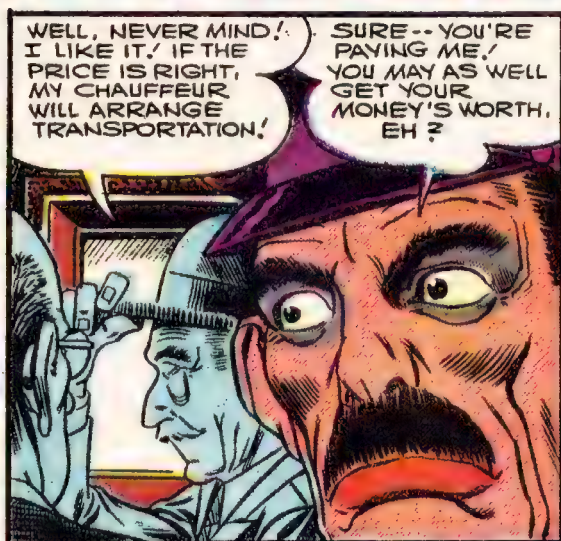
YES, SIR?

I'D LIKE TO BUY THIS PAINTING! CAN YOU TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT IT?



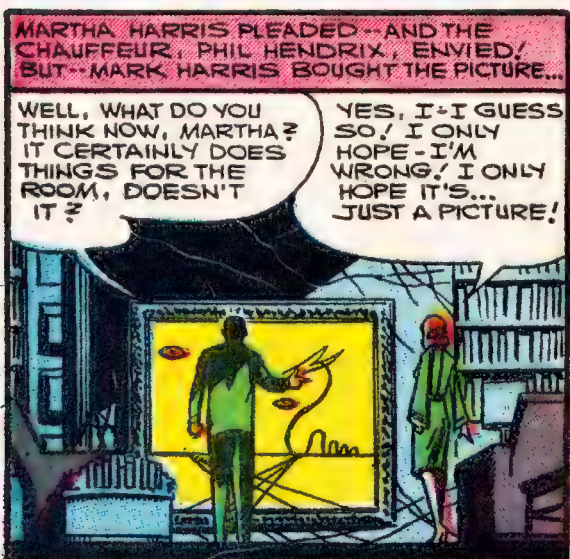
NOT MUCH, SIR! IT WAS PART OF THE ESTATE OF AN OLD RECLUSE! WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO PAINTED IT!

I SEE! I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT! IT DOES SEEM TO BE RATHER OLD!



WELL, NEVER MIND! I LIKE IT! IF THE PRICE IS RIGHT, MY CHAUFFEUR WILL ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION!

SURE-- YOU'RE PAYING ME! YOU MAY AS WELL GET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH, EH?



MARTHA HARRIS PLEADED--AND THE CHAUFFEUR, PHIL HENDRIX, ENVIED! BUT--MARK HARRIS BOUGHT THE PICTURE...

WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK NOW, MARTHA? IT CERTAINLY DOES THINGS FOR THE ROOM, DOESN'T IT?

YES, I--I GUESS SO! I ONLY HOPE--I'M WRONG! I ONLY HOPE IT'S... JUST A PICTURE!

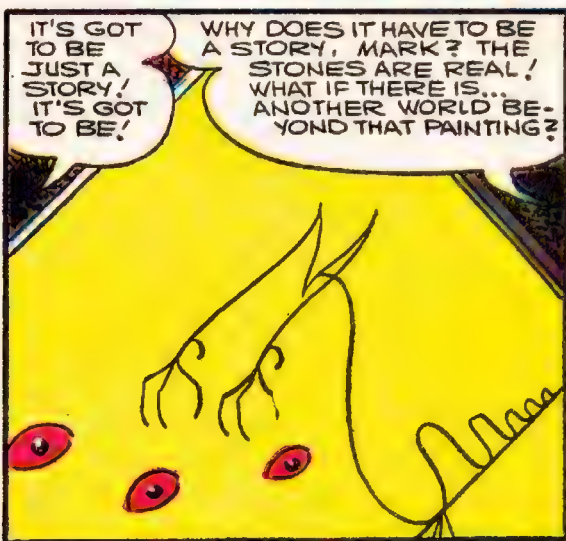
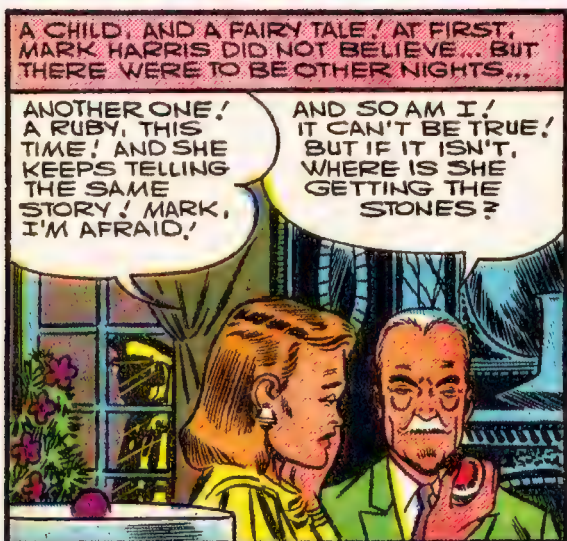
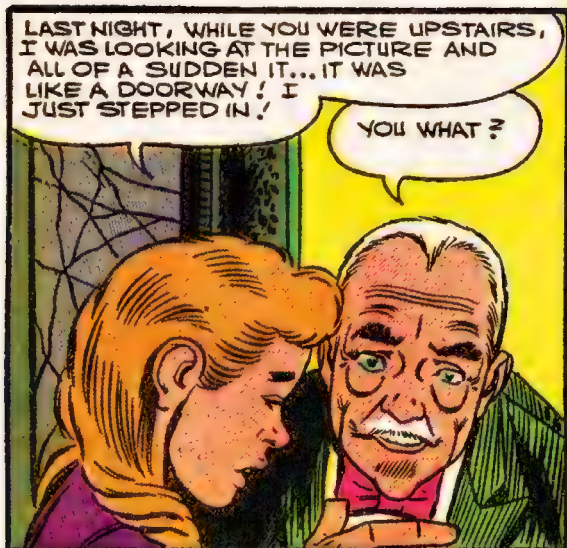


BUT WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE? MARK HARRIS SMILED TOLERANTLY AND FORGOT HIS WIFE'S WORDS! BUT ONLY UNTIL THE NEXT DAY...

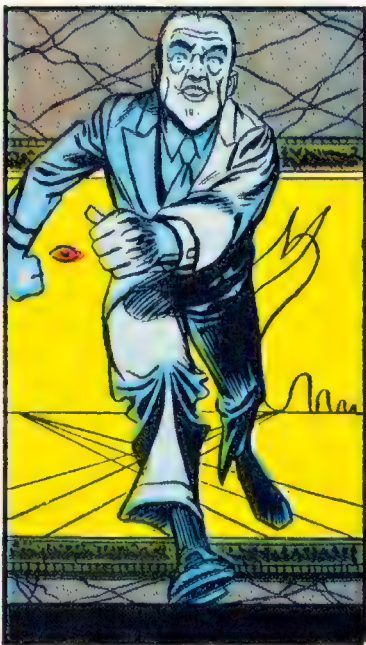
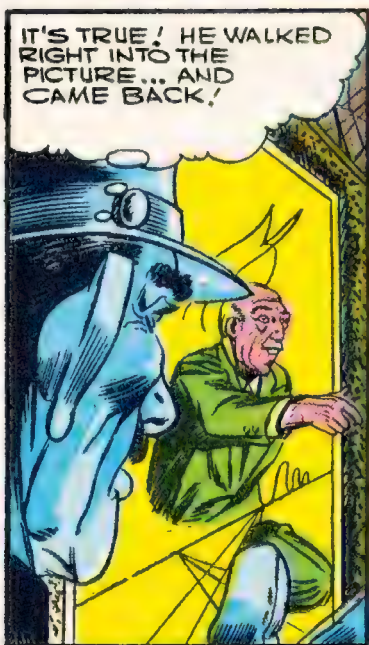
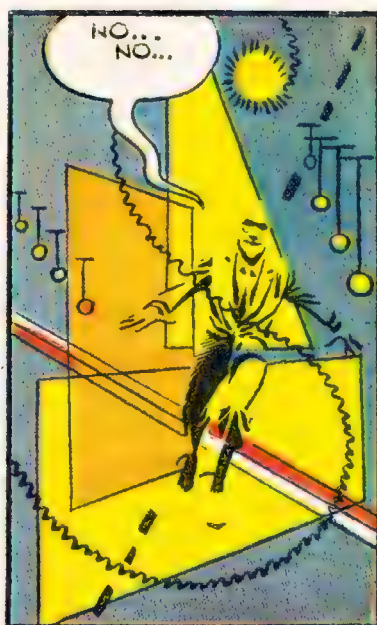
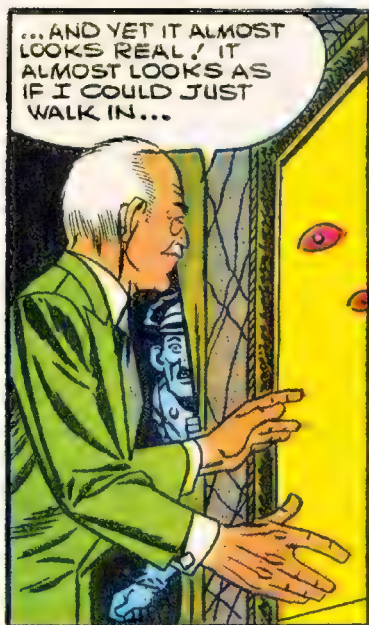
A DIAMOND! SHERRY, WHERE DID YOU GET IT?

FROM THE PICTURE! OH, DADDY, IT WAS SUCH FUN!













I DID IT! I'M THERE!  
THE PICTURE IS  
A DOORWAY!



I'M RICH...  
RICH!



RUBIES, DIAMONDS...  
I CAN HAVE ANY-  
THING--ANYTHING!



FOR A LITTLE WHILE PHIL  
HENDRIX WENT HALF MAD  
WITH GREED! BUT THEN,  
REASON RETURNED...

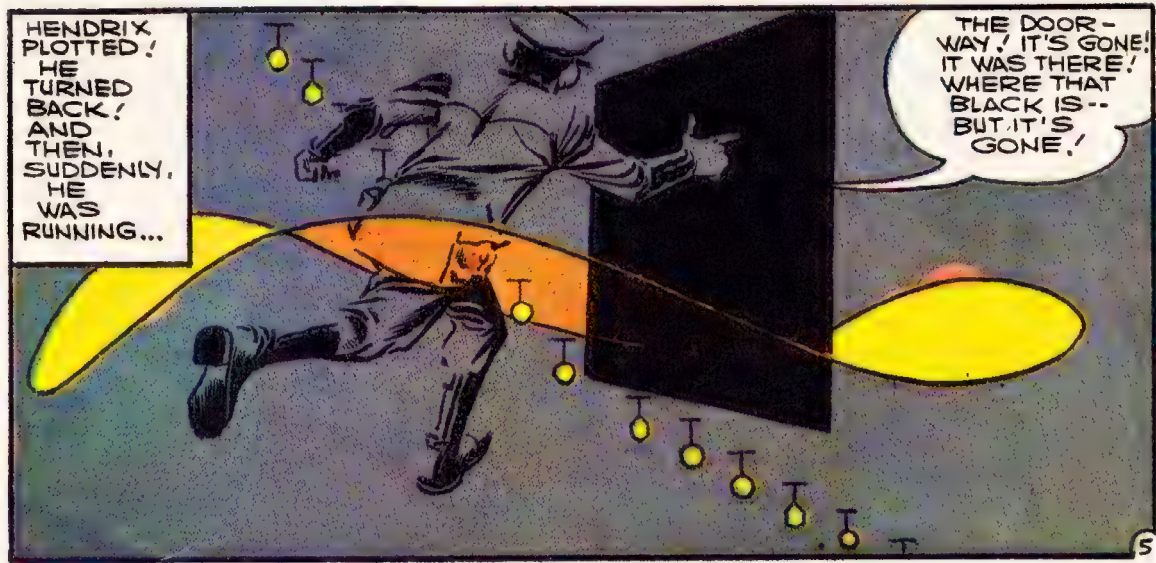
THIS COULD BE MINE...  
ALL OF IT, IF ONLY  
THE PAINTING  
WERE **MINE!**



I'LL TAKE IT... ONCE I  
HAVE IT, THEY'LL  
**NEVER** FIND ME!  
SOUTH AMERICA  
HERE I COME!



EVERYTHING I EVER  
WANTED... ALL I HAVE  
TO DO IS GET THIS  
PAINTING!



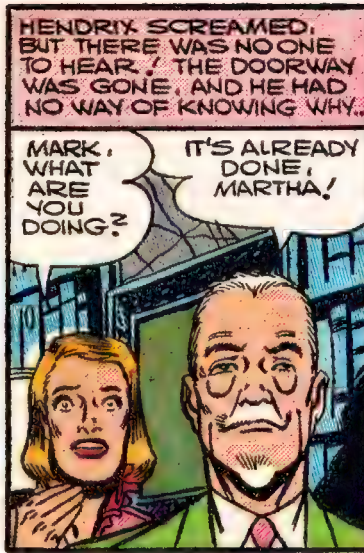
HENDRIX  
PLOTTED!  
HE  
TURNED  
BACK!  
AND  
THEN,  
SUDDENLY,  
HE  
WAS  
RUNNING...

THE DOOR-  
WAY! IT'S GONE!  
IT WAS THERE!  
WHERE THAT  
BLACK IS--  
BUT IT'S  
GONE!





LET ME IN! LET ME IN!



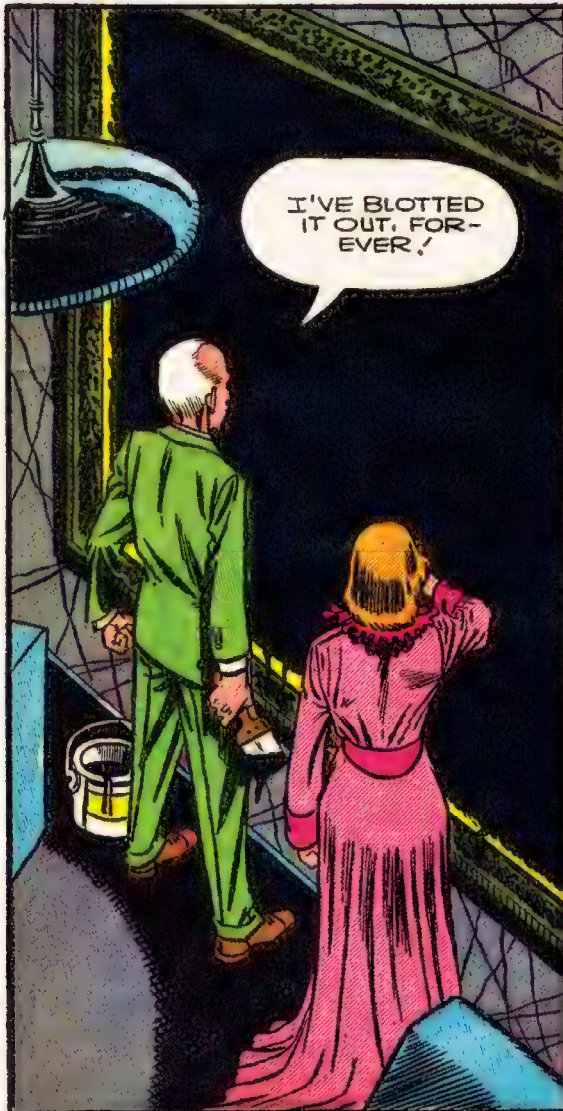
HENDRIX SCREAMED, BUT THERE WAS NO ONE TO HEAR! THE DOORWAY WAS GONE, AND HE HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING WHY..

MARK, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

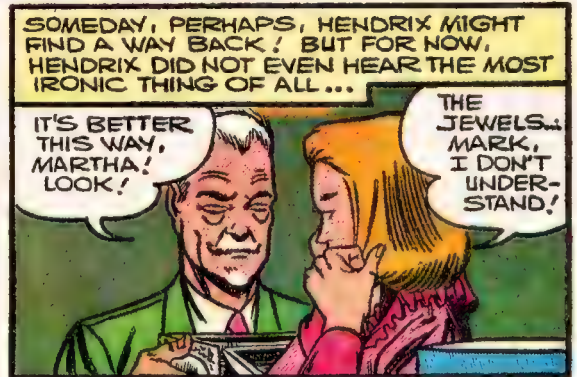
IT'S ALREADY DONE, MARTHA!



SHERRY WASN'T MAKING UP STORIES, MARTHA! I KNOW THAT NOW! SO I'VE MADE SURE THAT SHE'LL NEVER GO INTO THAT OTHER WORLD AGAIN!



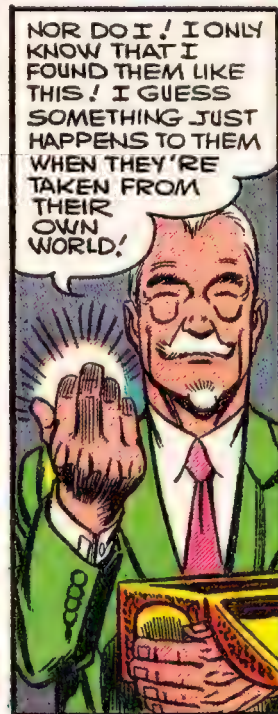
I'VE BLOTTED IT OUT, FOREVER!



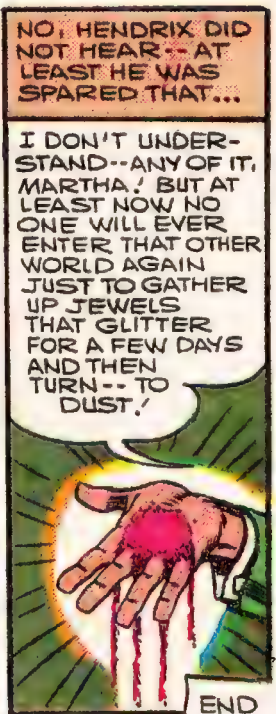
SOMEDAY, PERHAPS, HENDRIX MIGHT FIND A WAY BACK! BUT FOR NOW, HENDRIX DID NOT EVEN HEAR THE MOST IRONIC THING OF ALL...

IT'S BETTER THIS WAY, MARTHA! LOOK!

THE JEWELS, MARK, I DON'T UNDERSTAND!



NOR DO I! I ONLY KNOW THAT I FOUND THEM LIKE THIS! I GUESS SOMETHING JUST HAPPENS TO THEM WHEN THEY'RE TAKEN FROM THEIR OWN WORLD!



NO, HENDRIX DID NOT HEAR-- AT LEAST HE WAS SPARED THAT...

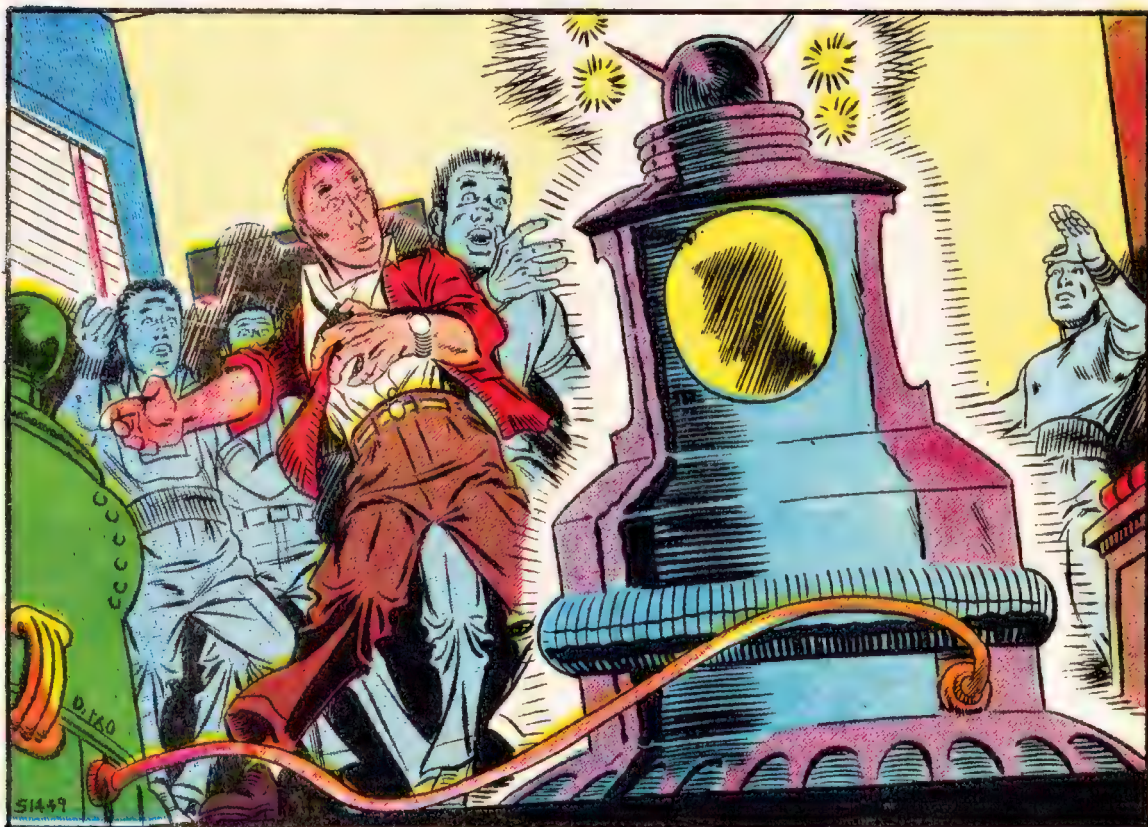
I DON'T UNDERSTAND--ANY OF IT, MARTHA! BUT AT LEAST NOW NO ONE WILL EVER ENTER THAT OTHER WORLD AGAIN JUST TO GATHER UP JEWELS THAT GLITTER FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEN TURN-- TO DUST!

END

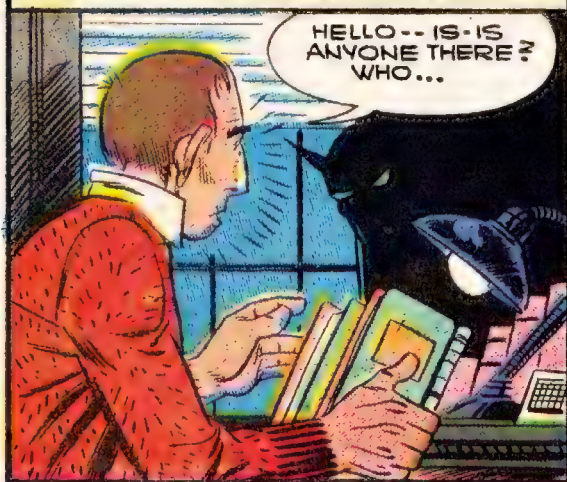


JOE SAWYER LOVED A PRACTICAL JOKE -- AND THIS ONE WAS A MASTERPIECE!  
BUT HE SHOULD HAVE MADE CERTAIN THAT HE WOULD HAVE ....

# The **LAST LAUGH**



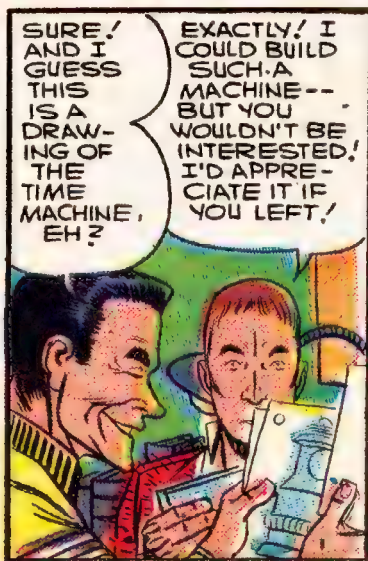
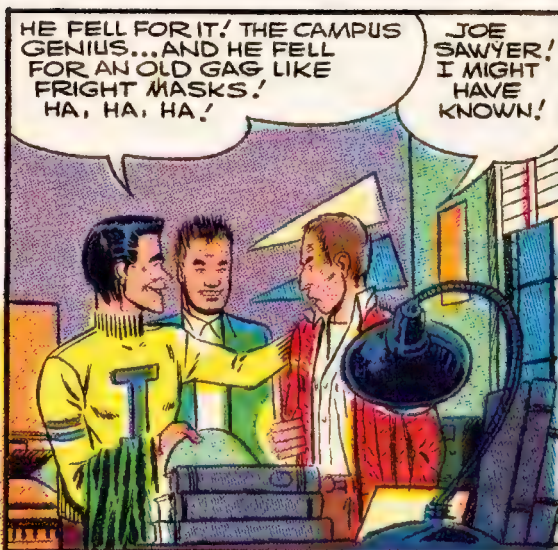
ALL I CAN SAY IS -- I WASN'T TO BLAME!  
IT WAS ALL JOE SAWYER'S DOING! HE  
WAS THE ONE WHO STARTED IT ALL...



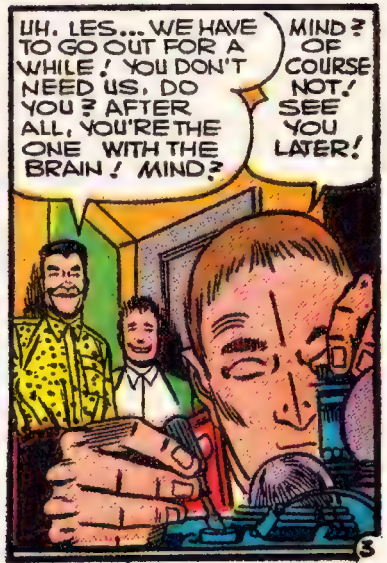
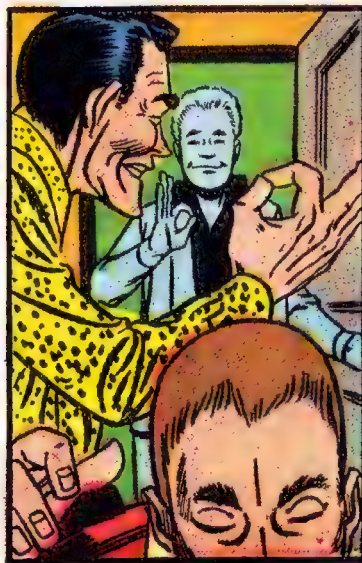
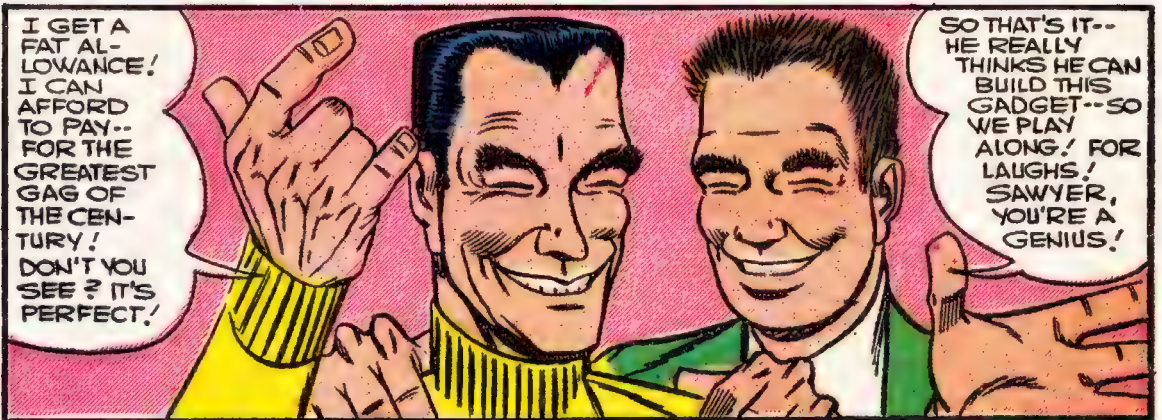
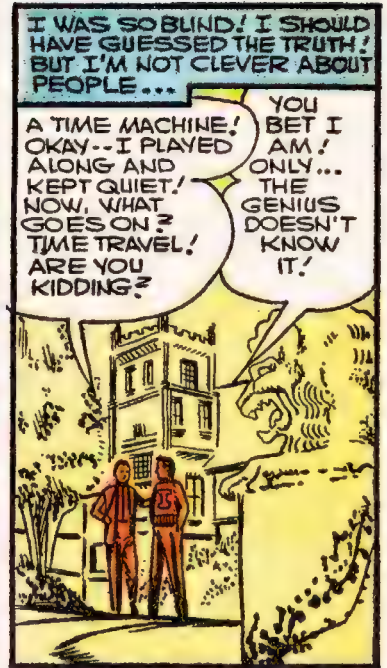
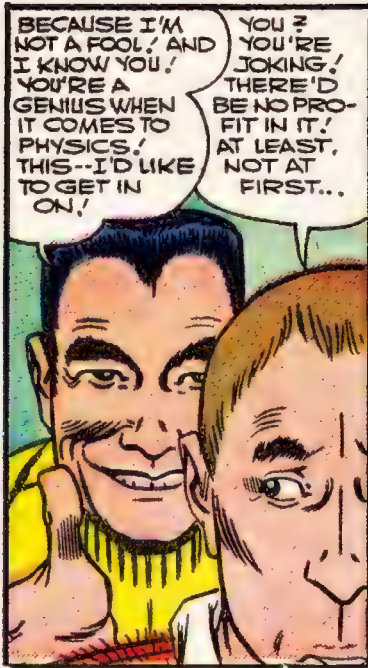
OH, NO!  
GET  
AWAY...



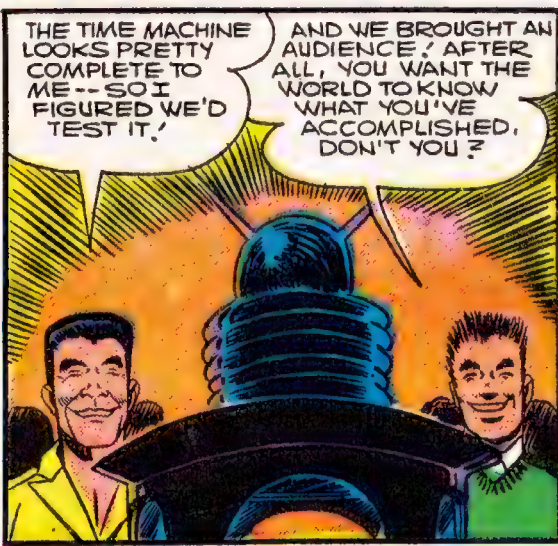
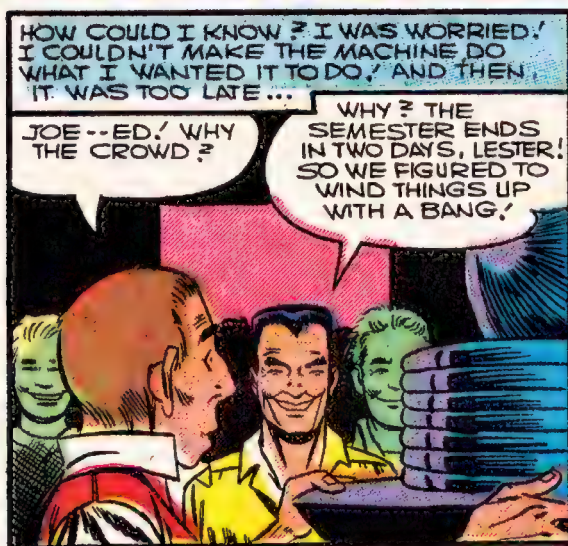
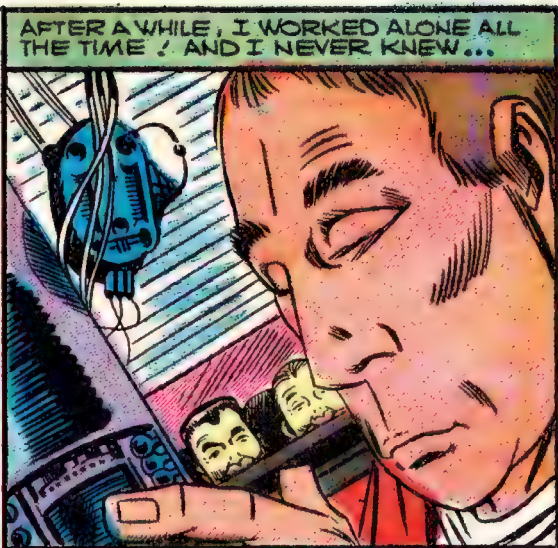
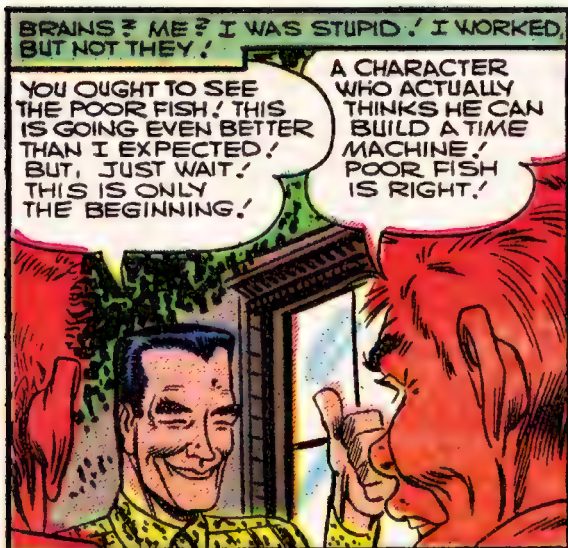




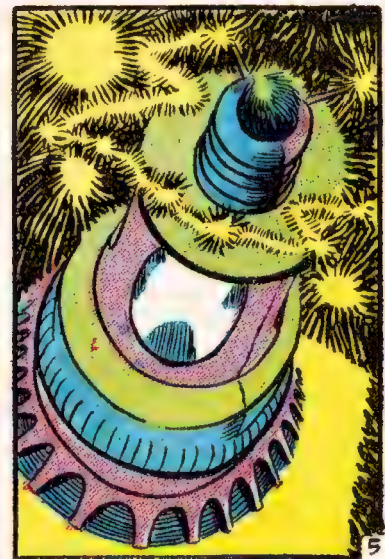
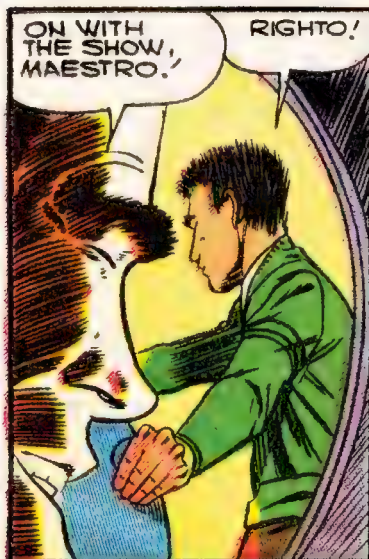
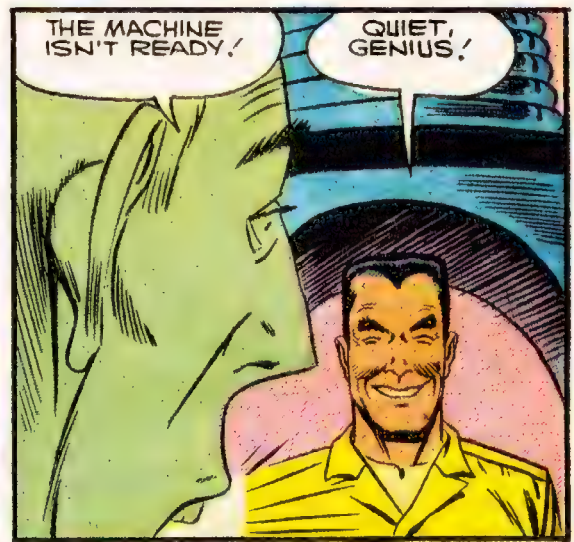
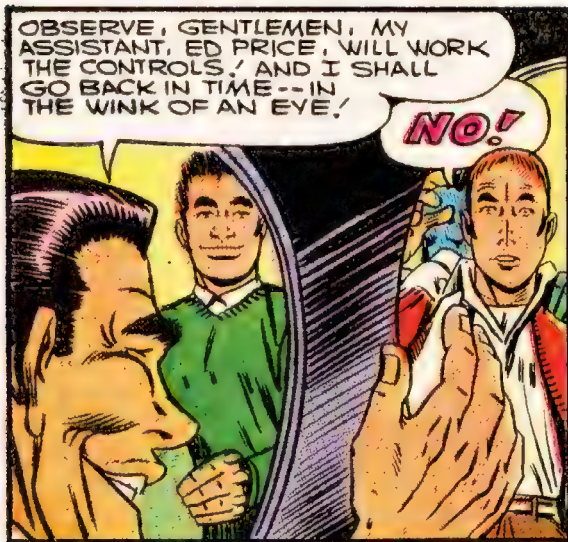
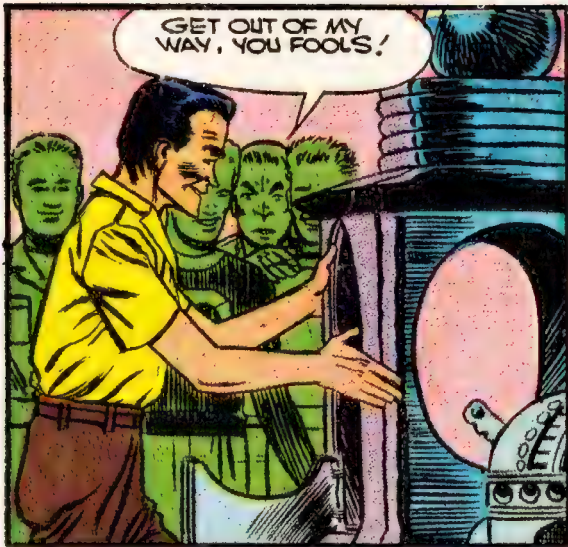














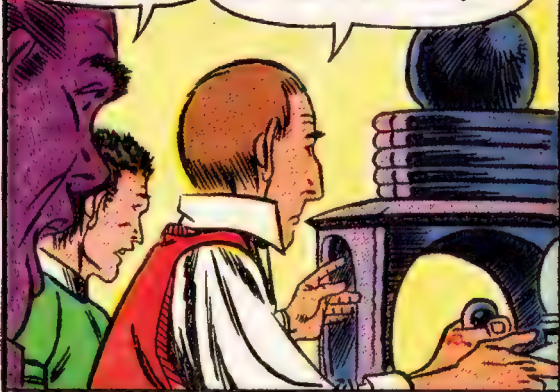
IT WAS ALL OVER IN SECONDS! I GOT TO THE CONTROLS THEN-- BUT IT WAS USELESS...



I TRIED-- BUT I COULDN'T STOP IT IN TIME...

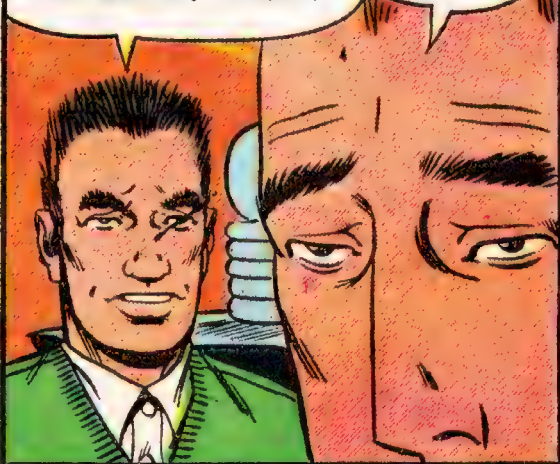
HE'S GONE! JUST... LIKE THAT!

HE'S GONE TWO HUNDRED YEARS BACK IN TIME! THAT'S WHAT THE CONTROLS WERE SET FOR!



ALL RIGHT! MAYBE IT WAS! BUT NOW BRING HIM BACK! HURRY!

I CAN'T!



BACK IN... YOU IDIOT! YOU DIDN'T TELL US THE MACHINE WORKED!

YOU DIDN'T LET ME! IT WAS YOUR DOING!



THEY WEREN'T LAUGHING THEN! NONE OF THEM! THEY WERE GRIM! BUT THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE DONE...

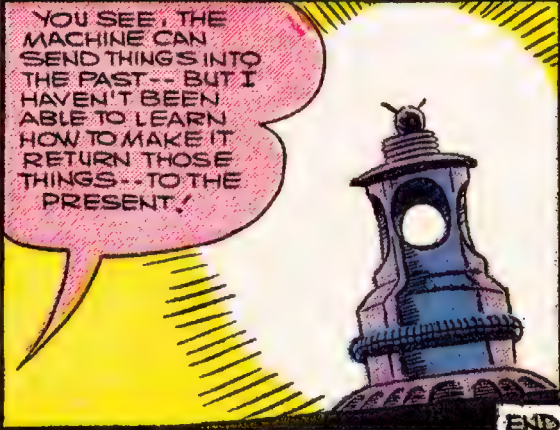
YOU CAN'T? YOU MUST! YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE SAWYER-- SOMEWHERE IN THE PAST!

I HAVE NO CHOICE! I TOLD YOU-- THE MACHINE WASN'T READY! I STILL HAD THINGS TO WORK OUT!



THERE WAS NOTHING AT ALL TO BE DONE! NOT THEN! MAYBE, IN TIME, I'LL BE ABLE TO BRING SAWYER BACK! BUT MEANWHILE, I WONDER IF HE'S STILL LAUGHING-- WHEREVER HE IS?

YOU SEE, THE MACHINE CAN SEND THINGS INTO THE PAST-- BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE IT RETURN THOSE THINGS-- TO THE PRESENT!

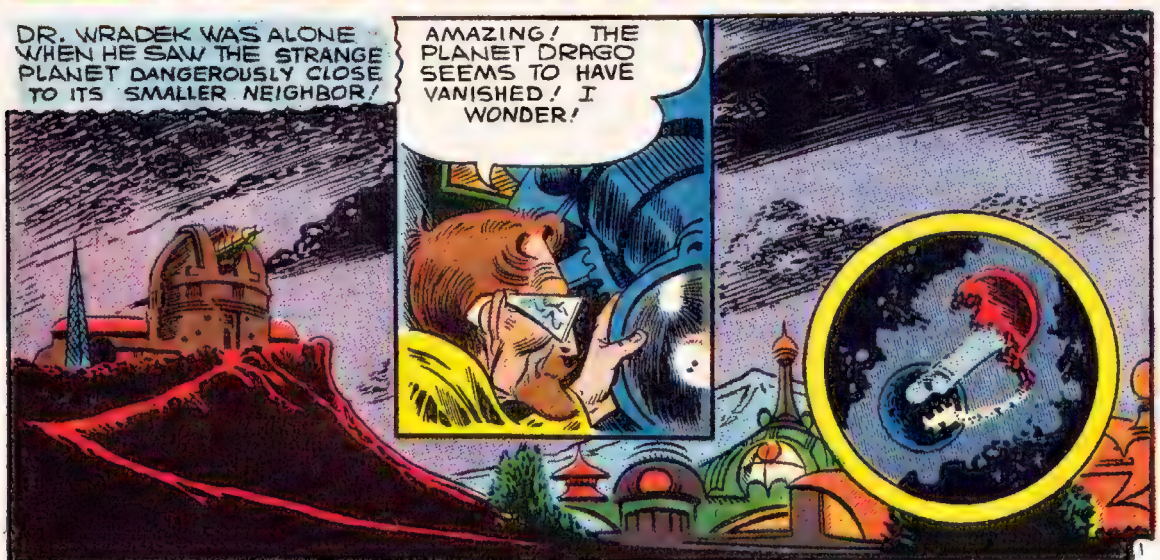
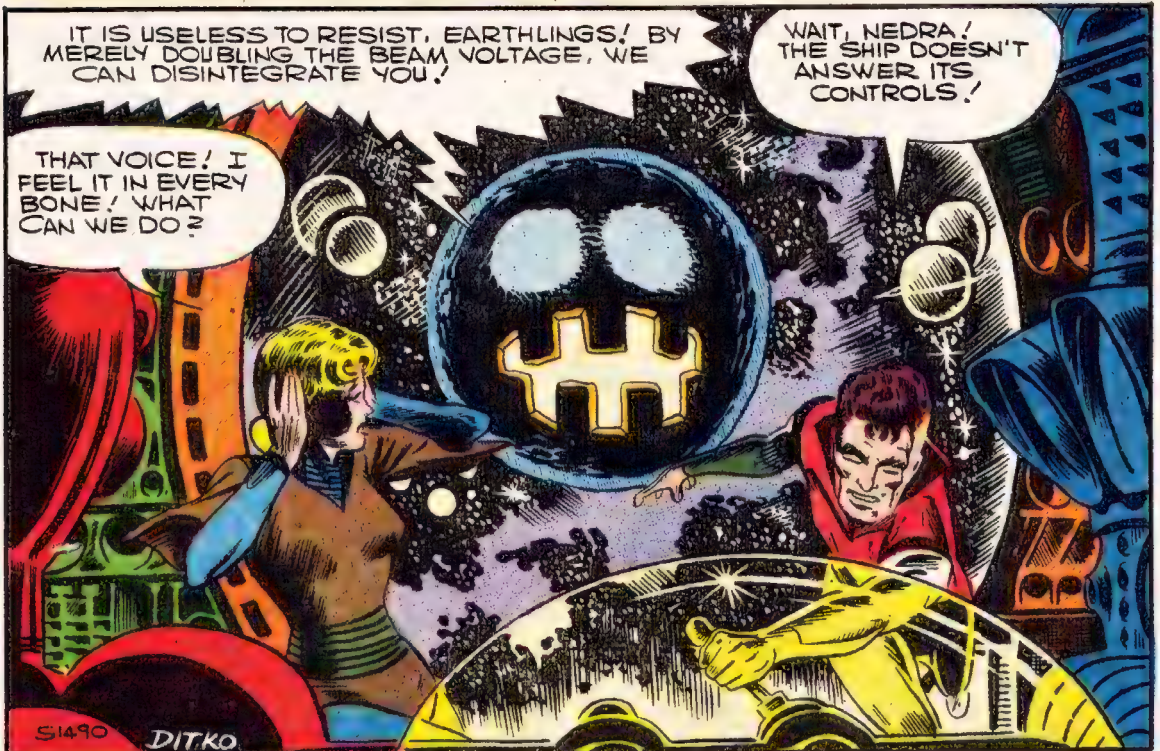


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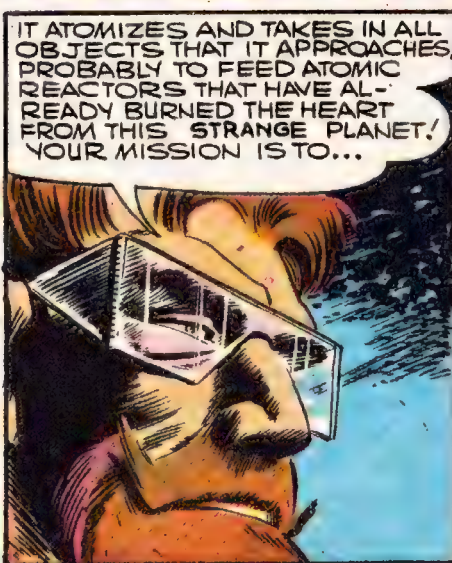
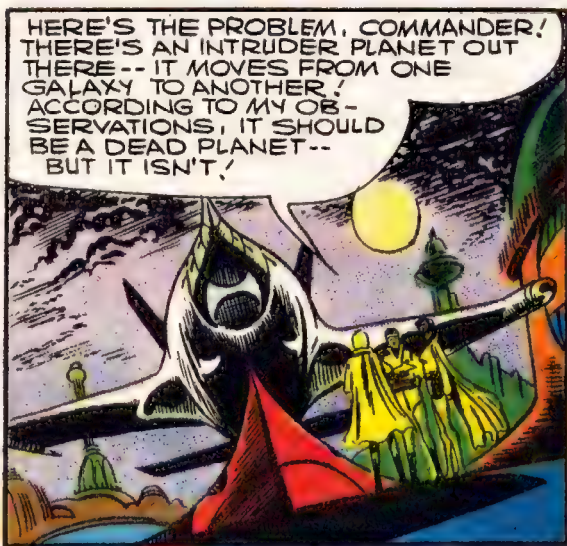
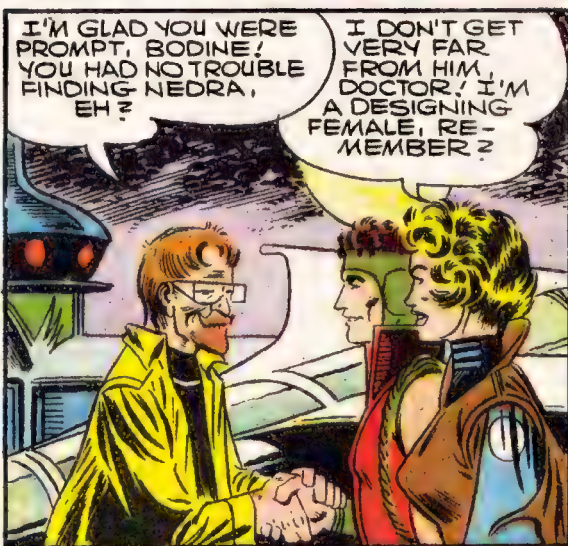


# MYSTERY PLANET

**I**N COUNTLESS OBSERVATORIES ALL OVER THE PLANET EARTH, MEN SCANNED THE SKIES, PROBING THE MYSTERIES OF UNKNOWN WORLDS, WATCHING THE GALAXIES ALREADY CHARTED AND EXPLORED BY OUR SPACE SERVICE! ONLY ONE MAN, DR. ANTON WRADEK, RECEIVED ALL THE ASTRONOMERS' REPORTS... AND IT WAS HE WHO FIRST WITNESSED THE MYSTERIOUS PLANET IN ACTION -- BUT LATER, COMMANDER BRYAN BODINE SAW IT REPEATED... AND THEN FELT THE GIGANTIC MAW ENGULF HIS SPACE SHIP TOO...







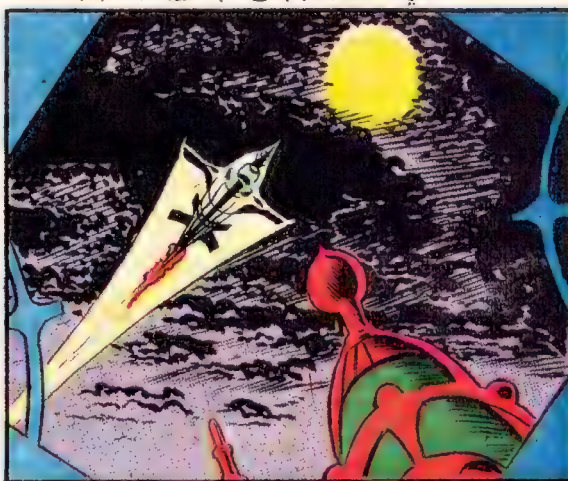


THE CANNIBAL PLANET IS ABSORBING ALL PLANETS IN OUR GALAXY THAT ARE ABOUT THE SIZE OF EARTH! I'M AFRAID YOU MUST LEAVE AT ONCE!

YES, SIR! WELL, NEDRA, OFF WE GO AGAIN!



THE GIANT ROCKET SHIP, EMPTIED OF CARGO AND ARMAMENT TO CARRY EXTRA FUEL, BLASTED OFF...



WHAT'S THE COURSE, NAVIGATOR?

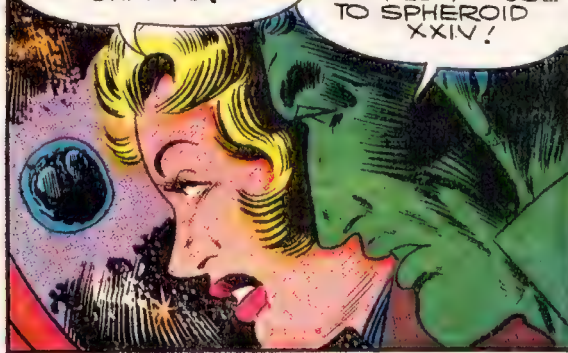
ACCORDING TO THE DATA PROVIDED BY WRADEK, THE MYSTERY PLANET IS ABOUT SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND MILES PAST SATURN!



THE SPACE SHIP FROM EARTH CRUISED THE OUTER RIM OF EARTH'S SOLAR SYSTEM FOR DAYS, THEN WEEKS! FUEL WAS RUNNING LOW ... THEN...

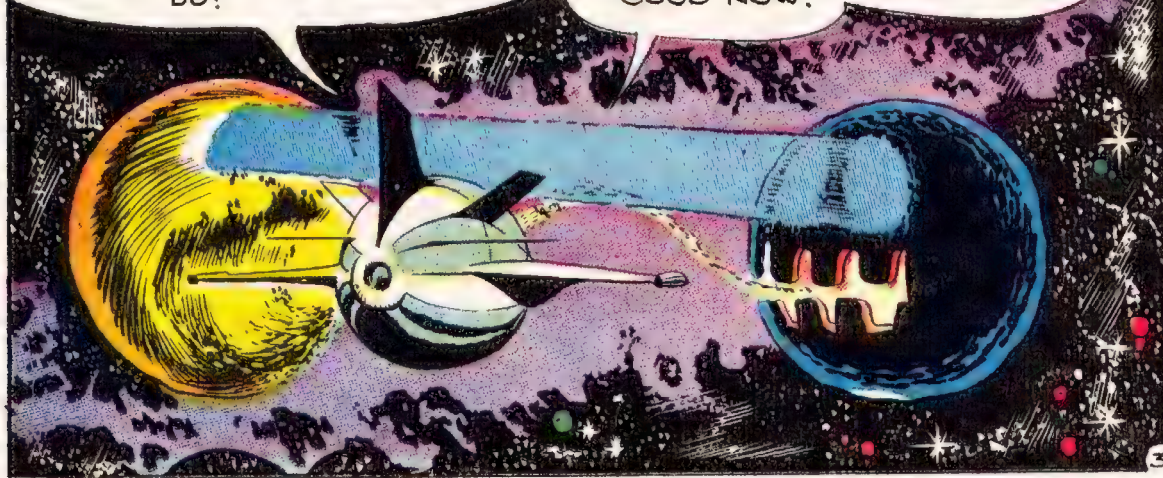
LOOK, BRYAN-- THAT PLANET THERE! IT'S NOT ON MY CHARTS!

I NEVER SAW IT BEFORE EITHER! IT'S AWFULLY CLOSE TO SPHEROID XXIV!

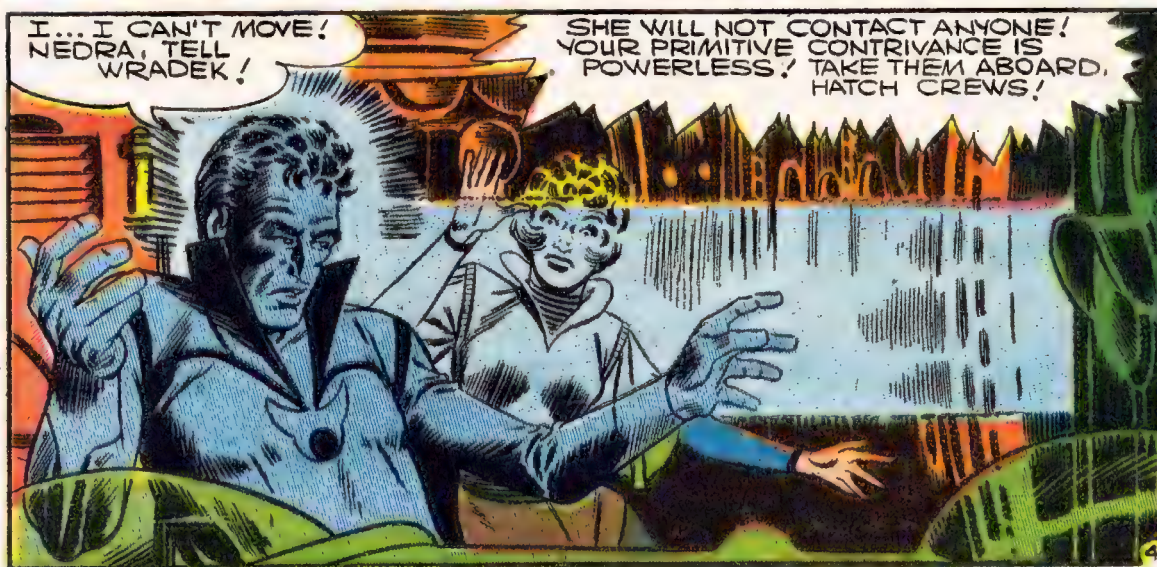
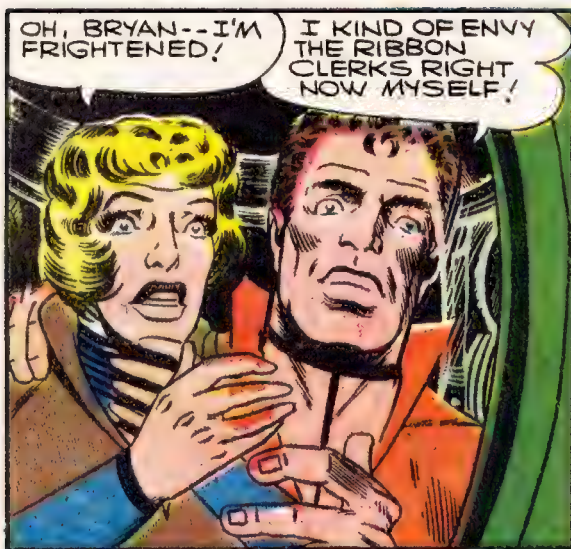
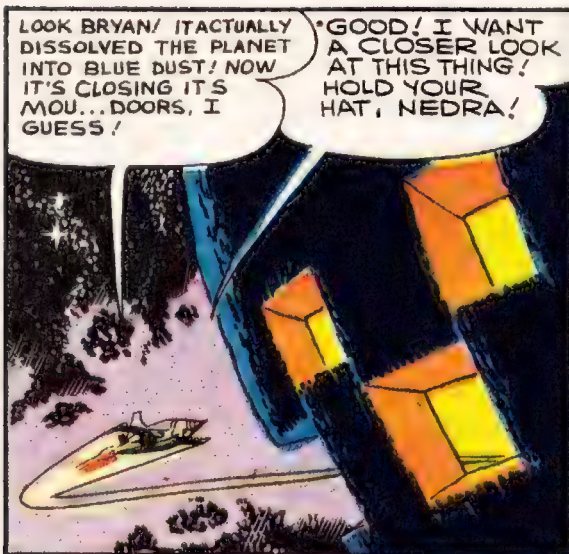


BRYAN, LOOK! IT'S DRAWING THE OTHER PLANET TO ITSELF! IS THERE SOMETHING WE CAN DO?

WE ONLY HAVE OUR SHOCK RAYS THAT WE USE FOR METEORITES! THEY WOULDN'T DO ANY GOOD NOW!











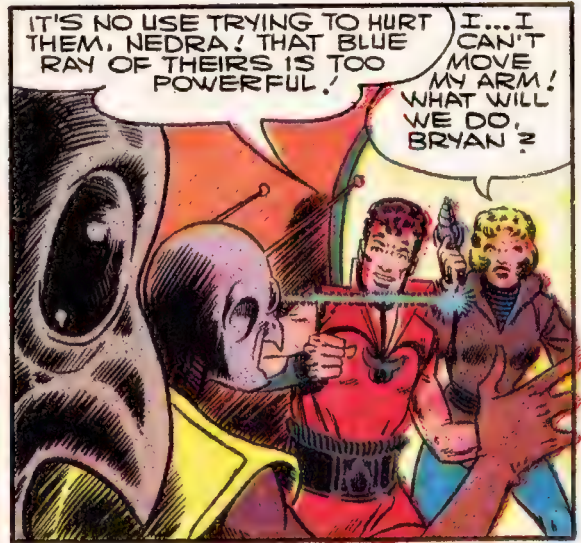
OUR RADIO IS NO GOOD, BRYAN!  
I... I GUESS THIS IS OUR  
LAST TRIP TOGETHER!

MAYBE NOT! IF THEY WERE  
GOING TO DESTROY US, THEY  
WOULD'VE DONE IT  
BY NOW!



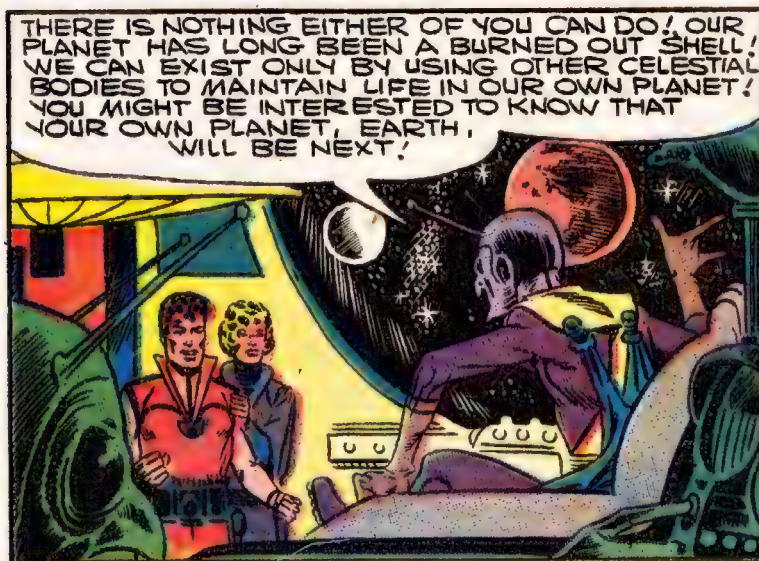
YOU WILL LEAVE  
THE SHIP OR  
WE WILL RE-  
MOVE YOU  
FORCIBLY!

I-I CAN'T HELP  
IT, BRYAN-- I'M  
FRIGHTENED!

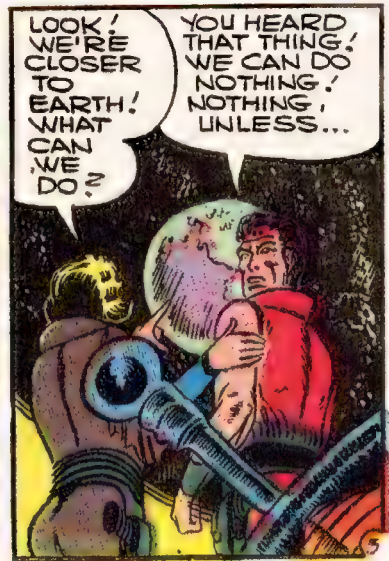


IT'S NO USE TRYING TO HURT  
THEM, NEDRA! THAT BLUE  
RAY OF THEIRS IS TOO  
POWERFUL!

I... I  
CAN'T  
MOVE  
MY ARM!  
WHAT WILL  
WE DO,  
BRYAN?



THERE IS NOTHING EITHER OF YOU CAN DO! OUR  
PLANET HAS LONG BEEN A BURNED OUT SHELL!  
WE CAN EXIST ONLY BY USING OTHER CELESTIAL  
BODIES TO MAINTAIN LIFE IN OUR OWN PLANET!  
YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT  
YOUR OWN PLANET, EARTH,  
WILL BE NEXT!

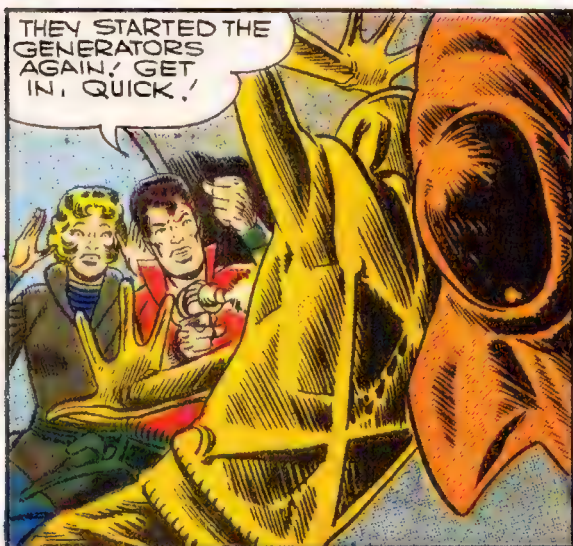
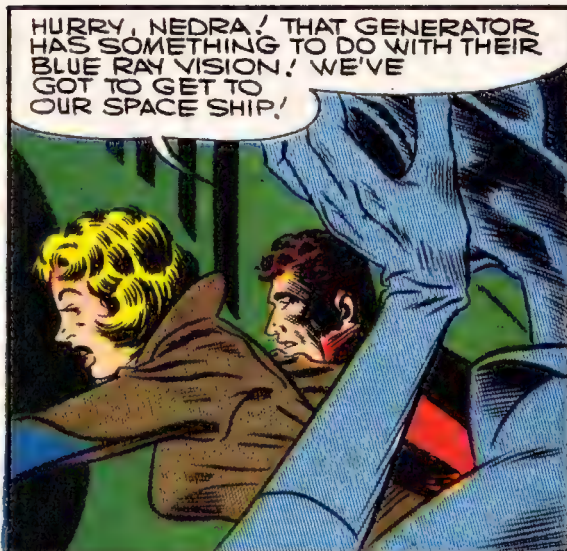
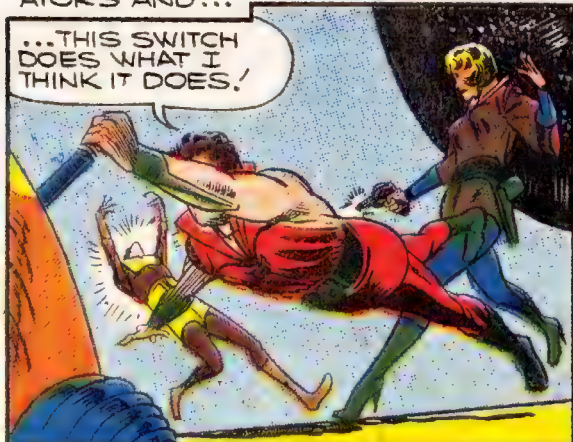


LOOK!  
WE'RE  
CLOSER  
TO  
EARTH!  
WHAT  
CAN  
WE  
DO?

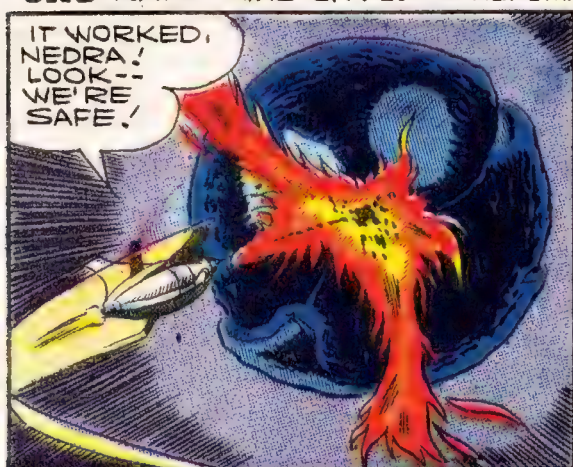
YOU HEARD  
THAT THING!  
WE CAN DO  
NOTHING!  
NOTHING,  
UNLESS...



COMMANDER BODINE, A MASTER ENGINEER, HAD EXAMINED THE CONTROLS. HE DEDUCED THAT ONE SWITCH WOULD CONTROL THE MASTER GENERATORS AND ...



COMMANDER BODINE AIMED THE SHOCK RAYS... THEN PRESSED THE FIRING BUTTON JUST AS THE PLANET'S BLUE RAYS CAME ON FULL STRENGTH..

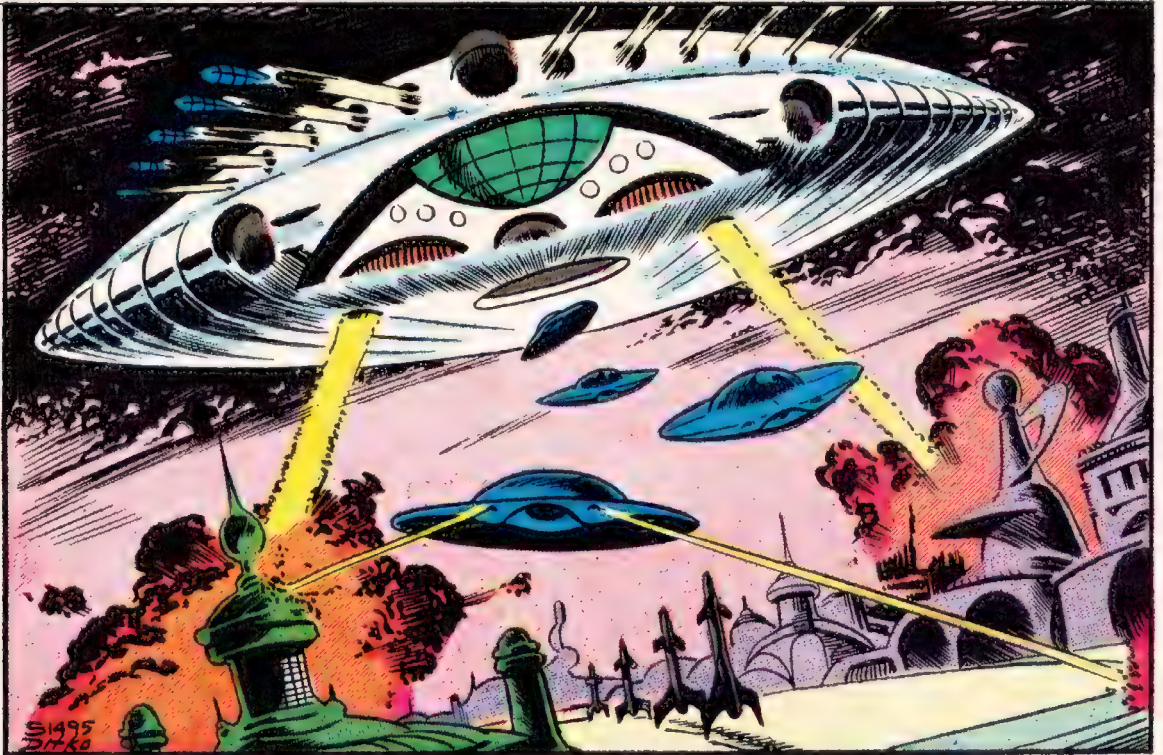


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# The CONQUERED EARTH

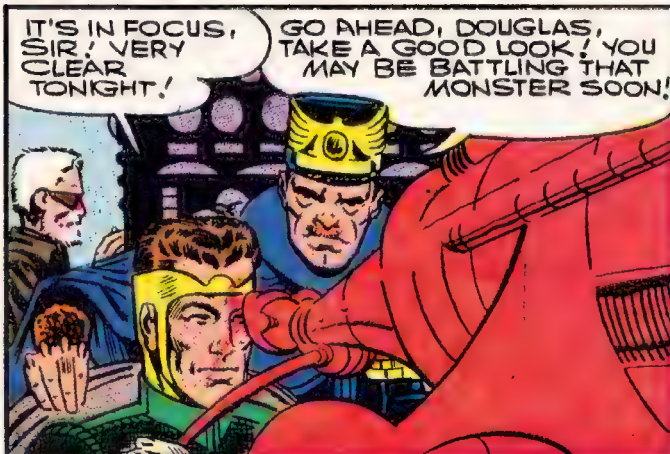
THE MIGHTY SHIP--THE DEADLIEST EVER SEEN IN EARTH'S GALAXY--HOVERED MENACINGLY OVER US WHILE THE INVADER DEMANDED COMPLETE SURRENDER! OUR MILITARY EXPERTS REFUSED TO ATTACK... SAID IT WOULD BE USELESS! NOTED MEN URGED THE NATIONS TO GIVE UP--AND OUR SPACE PILOTS STOOD BY THEIR SHIPS AWAITING ORDERS--AFRAID TO THINK OF WHAT COULD HAPPEN!



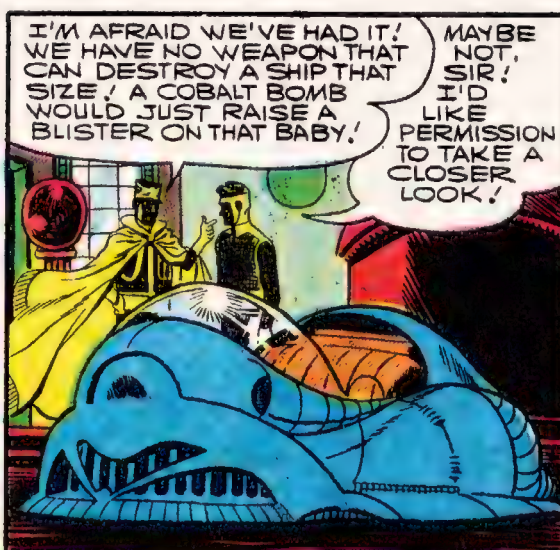
WHEN FIRST REPORTED, THE HUGE MISSILE FROM EARTH II IN GALAXY XIV WAS APPROACHING SLOWLY! EVEN THEN OUR SCIENTISTS KNEW IT WAS HUGE...

IT'S IN FOCUS, SIR! VERY CLEAR TONIGHT!

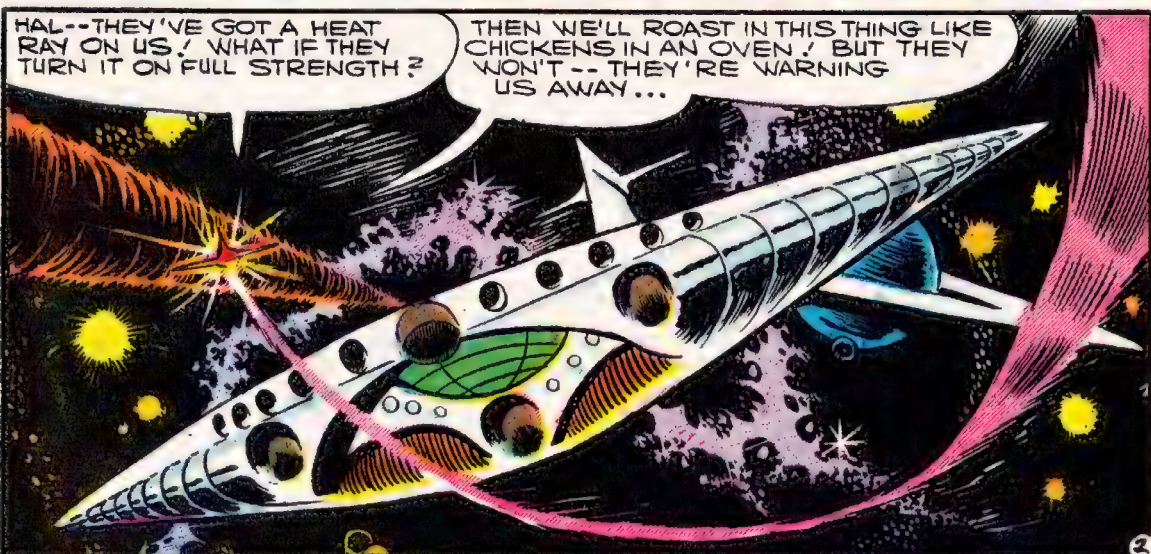
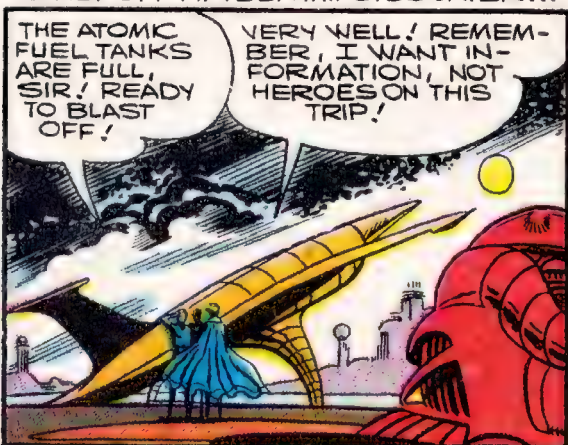
GO AHEAD, DOUGLAS, TAKE A GOOD LOOK! YOU MAY BE BATTLING THAT MONSTER SOON!





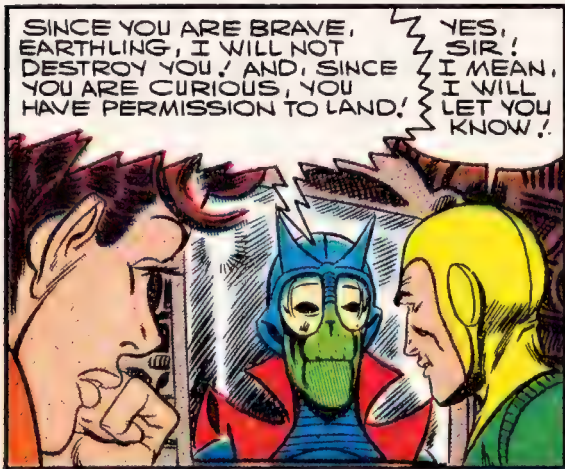


CAPTAIN DOUGLAS HAD BEEN SELECTED FOR JUST THAT PURPOSE! HE AND HIS CO-PILOT WERE READY TO BLAST OFF FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...

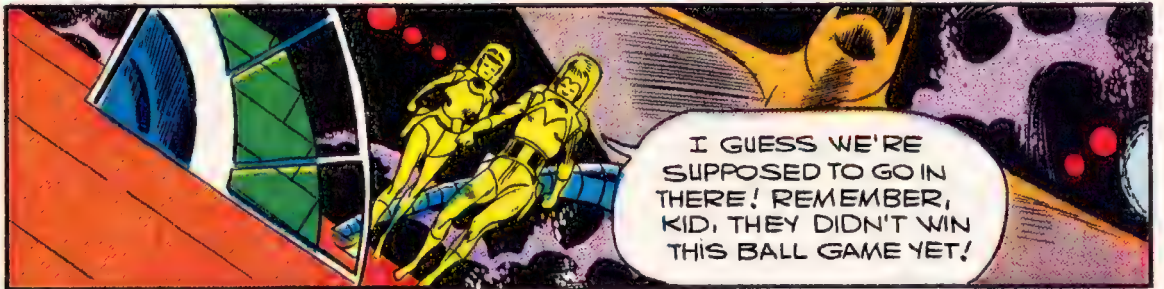
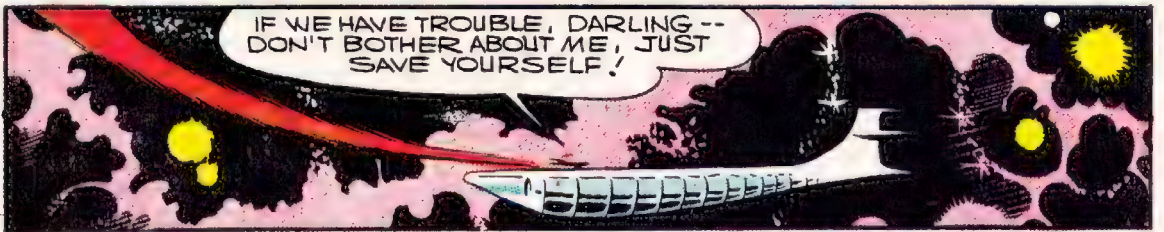
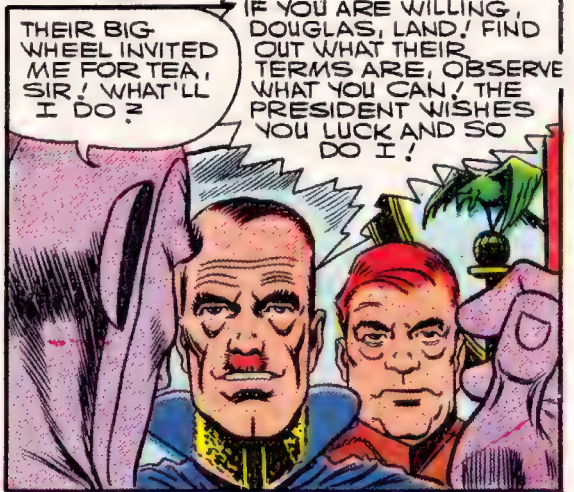




DISREGARDING THE WARNING, DOUGLAS BROUGHT HIS SHIP DOWN CLOSER -- THEN THE TELEON TUBE LIT AND...



DOUGLAS CONTACTED HIS SUPERIOR AT ONCE...







I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD SUCH A WALLOP! LOOKS A LITTLE UNDER- FIED, THOUGH!

OUR RATIONS ARE ADEQUATE! IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR YOU TO THINK OF MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS-- SUCH AS SAVING YOUR PLANET!

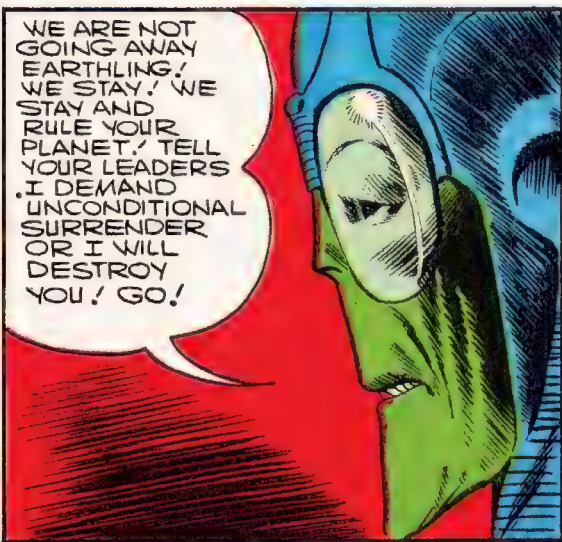


WITH THIS FLEET OF SPACE FIGHTERS, I COULD SCORCH EVERY CITY ON EARTH!

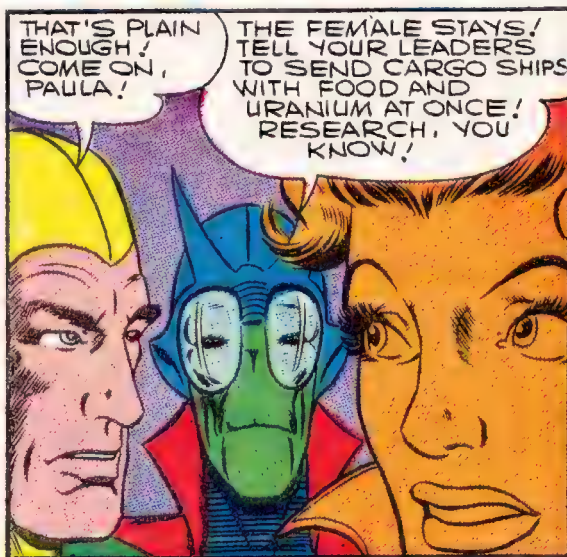


THIS IS ONE OF A BATTERY OF HEAT GUNS! ANY ONE OF THEM COULD MELT YOUR EARTH!

ALL RIGHT, WHAT DO YOU WANT? WHAT'S YOUR PRICE TO GO AWAY AND LEAVE US ALONE?

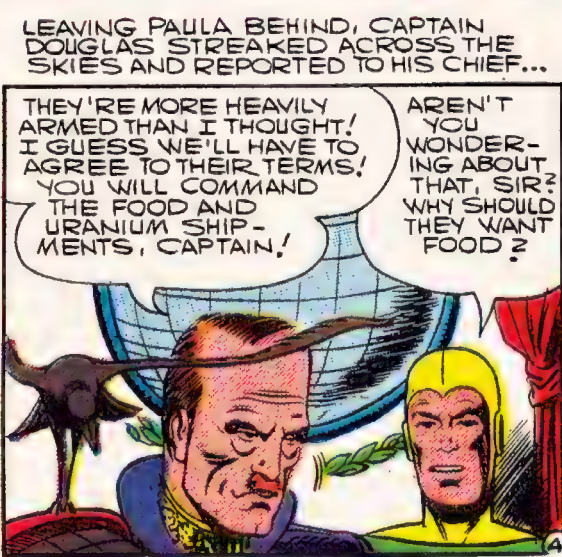


WE ARE NOT GOING AWAY EARTHLING! WE STAY! WE STAY AND RULE YOUR PLANET! TELL YOUR LEADERS I DEMAND UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OR I WILL DESTROY YOU! GO!



THAT'S PLAIN ENOUGH! COME ON, PAULA!

THE FEMALE STAYS! TELL YOUR LEADERS TO SEND CARGO SHIPS WITH FOOD AND URANIUM AT ONCE! RESEARCH, YOU KNOW!

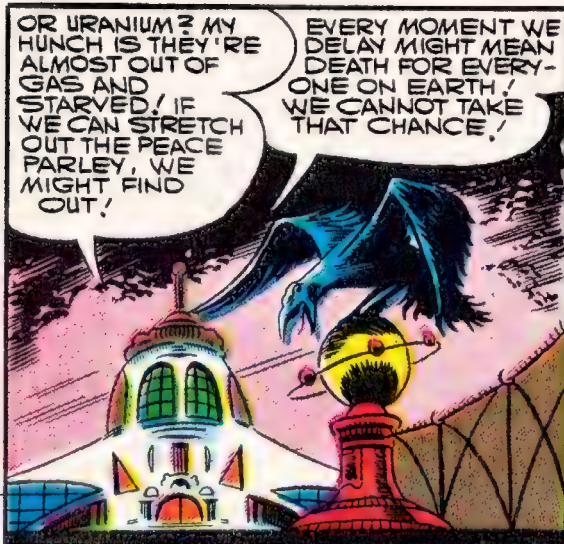


LEAVING PAULA BEHIND, CAPTAIN DOUGLAS STREAKED ACROSS THE SKIES AND REPORTED TO HIS CHIEF...

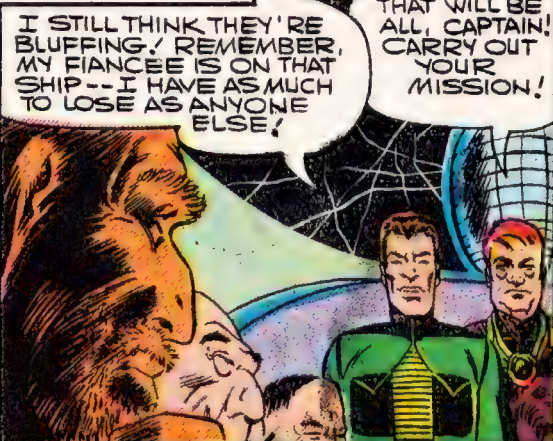
THEY'RE MORE HEAVILY ARMED THAN I THOUGHT! I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO AGREE TO THEIR TERMS! YOU WILL COMMAND THE FOOD AND URANIUM SHIP- MENTS, CAPTAIN!

AREN'T YOU WONDER- ING ABOUT THAT, SIR? WHY SHOULD THEY WANT FOOD?

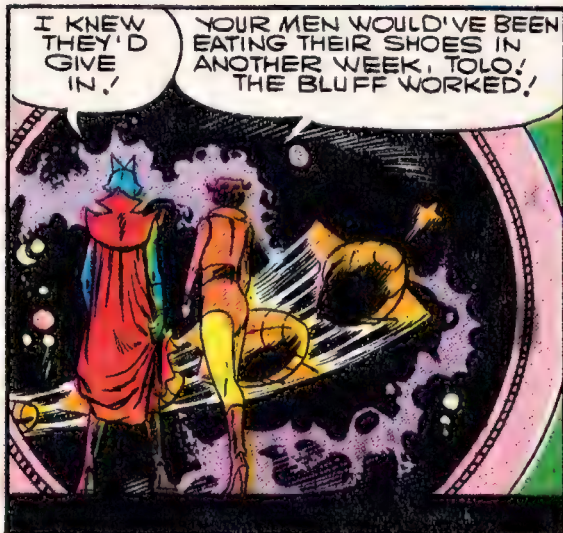




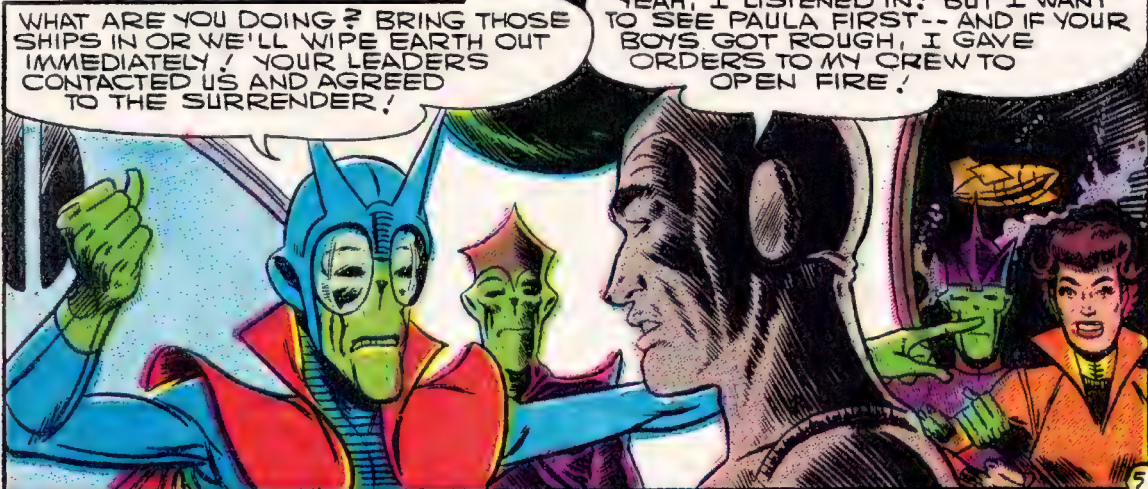
HUGE CARGO SHIPS WERE LOADED WITH FOOD AND FUEL! WHILE LEADERS OF OUR NATIONS DISCUSSED THE SURRENDER...



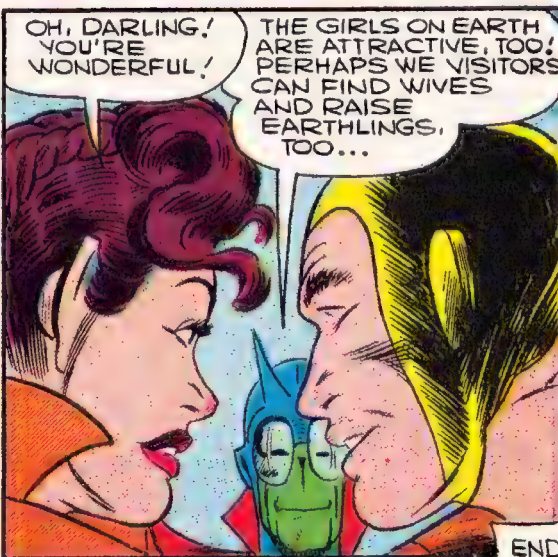
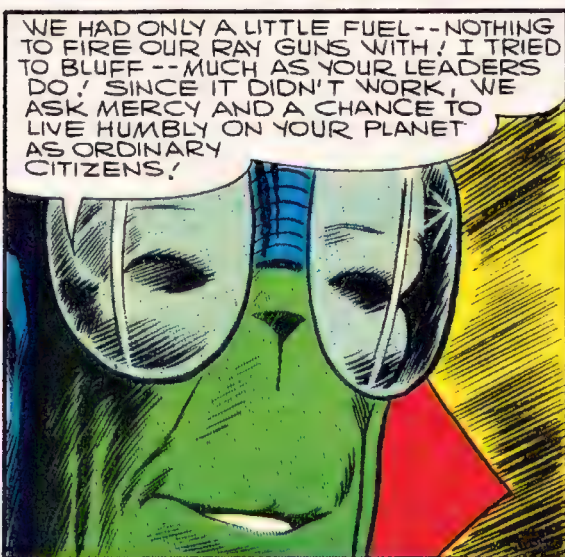
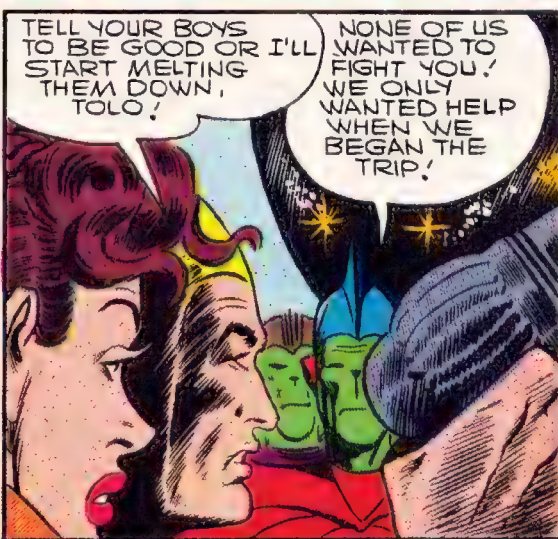
MEANWHILE, PAULA WAS LEARNING THINGS ON THE GIANT OF OUTER SPACE..



BUT CAPTAIN DOUGLAS DIDN'T LEAD THE HEAVILY LADEN CARGO SHIPS IN AT ONCE! HE LANDED FIRST...





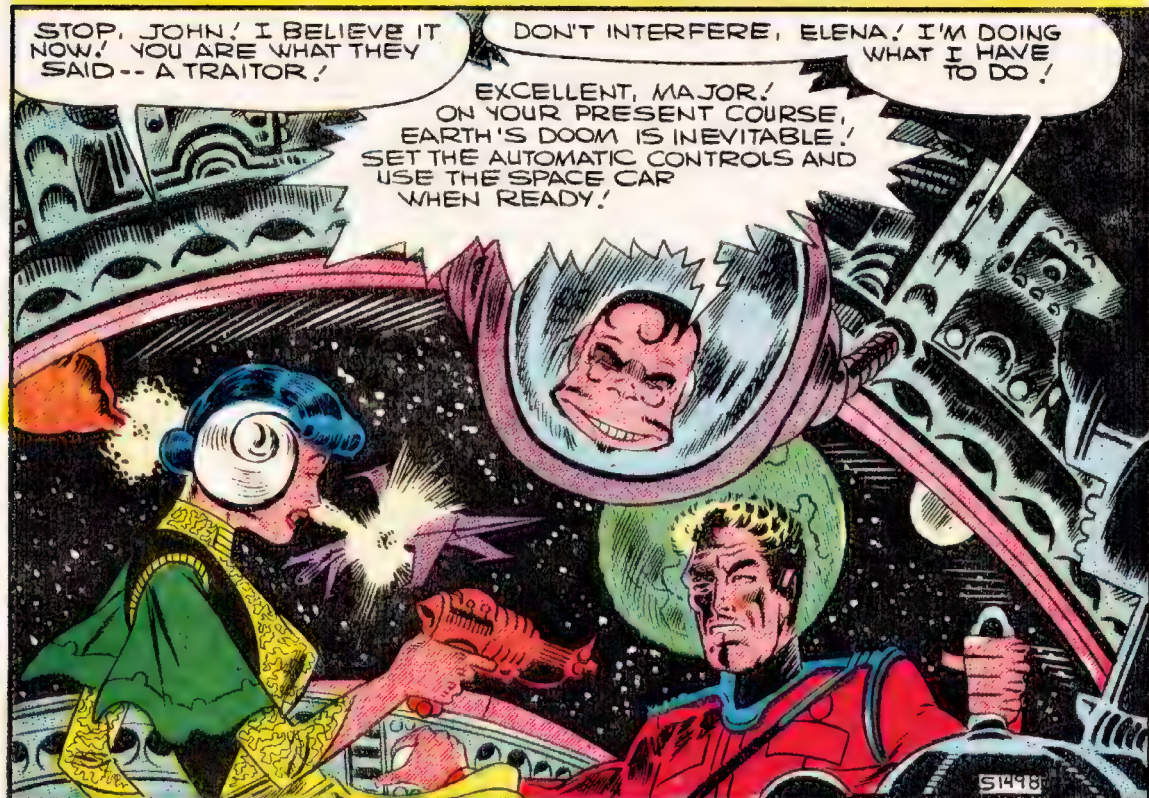


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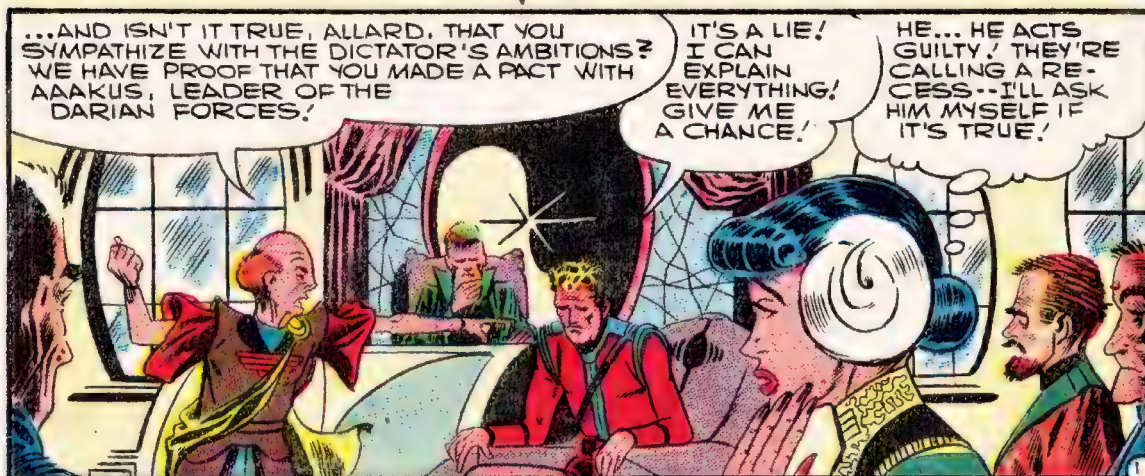


# ASSIGNMENT TREASON

THE MOMENT THAT THE SCIENTISTS OF EARTH HAD FEARED SINCE THE FIRST ATOM BOMB WAS AT HAND... THE WEAPON THAT WOULD DESTROY EARTH WAS A PROJECTILE IN SPACE AIMED AT THE HEART OF EARTH, APPROACHING AT A THOUSAND MILES A SECOND! WHO WAS DIRECTING THIS INSTRUMENT OF DOOM? MAJOR JOHN ALLARD, ONE OF THE ABLEST, MOST FEARLESS SPACE PILOTS THAT EARTH EVER HAD!

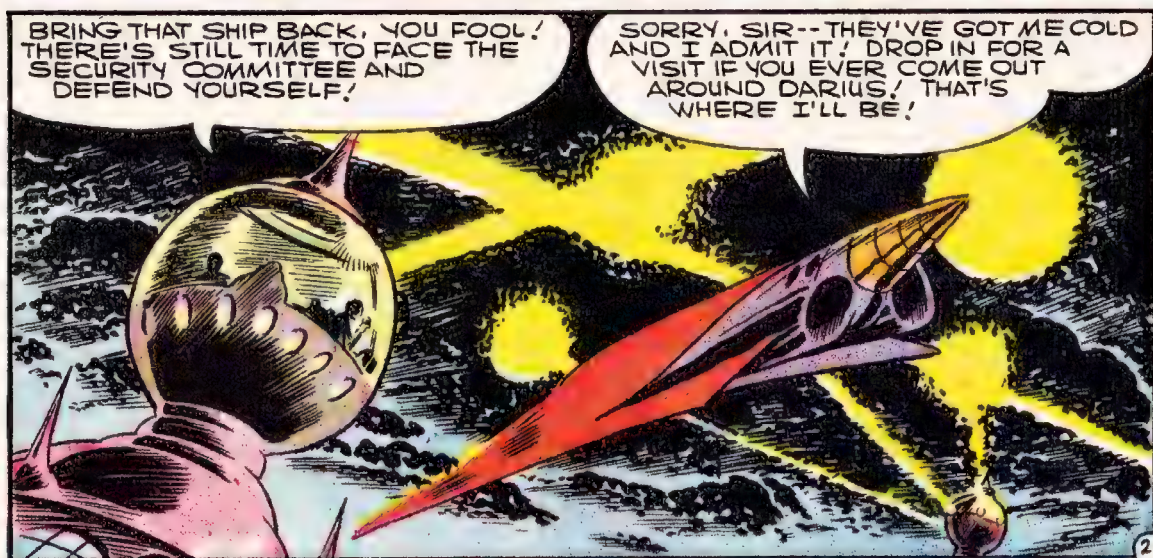
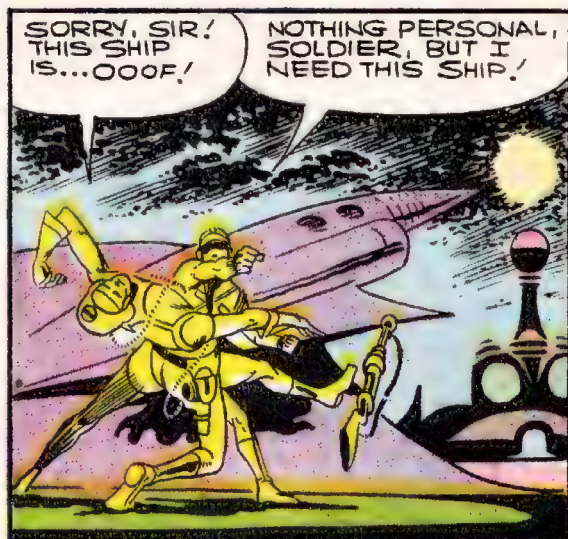
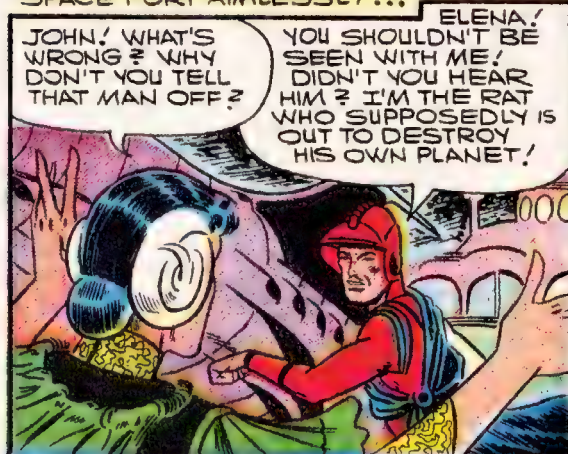


ONLY FORTY EIGHT HOURS BEFORE, MAJOR JOHN ALLARD WAS ONE OF THE MOST HIGHLY RESPECTED PILOTS IN EARTH'S SPACE SERVICE! THE DEFENSE COUNCIL HAD ASKED HIM TO TESTIFY ABOUT THE MENACE FROM THE PLANET DARIUS...

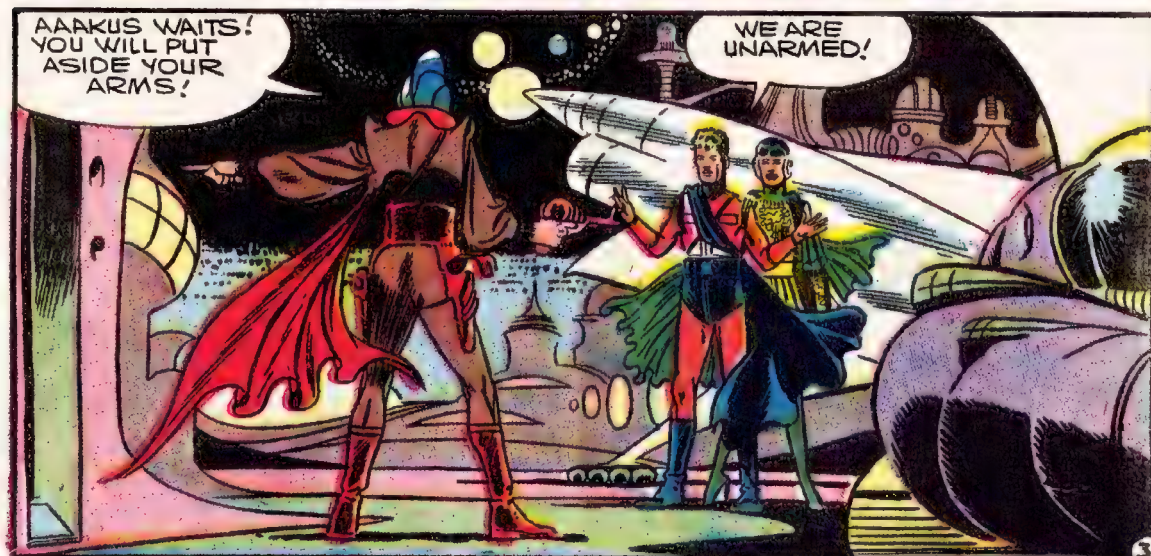
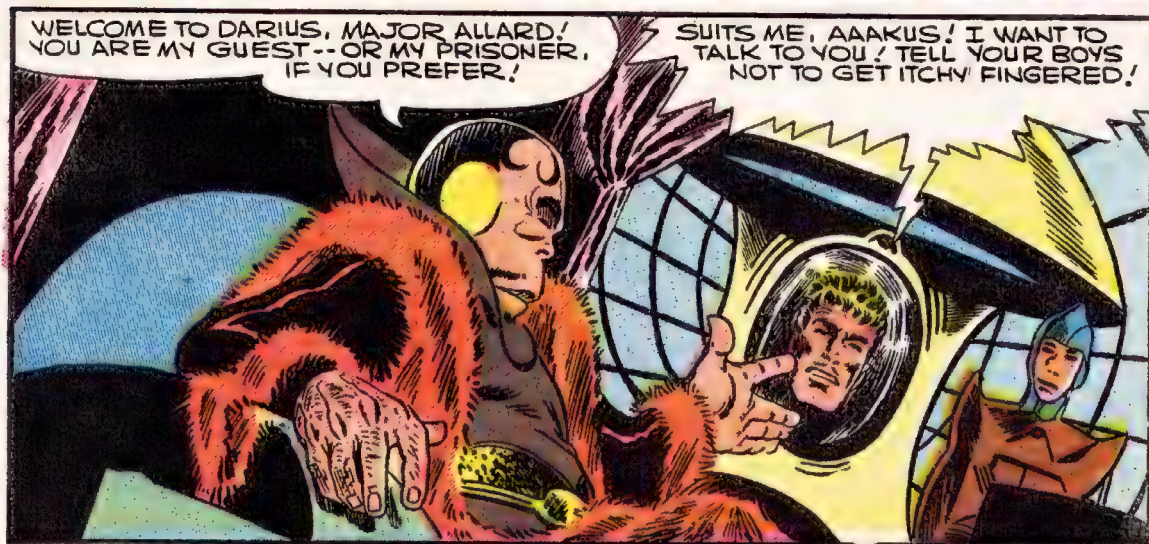
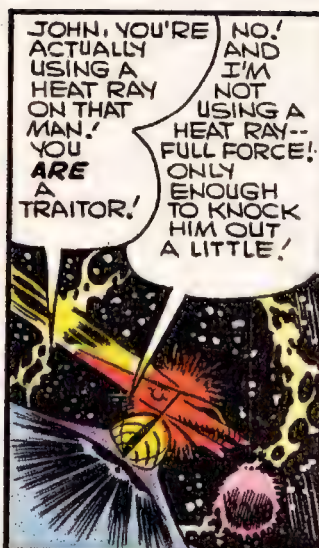




MAJOR JOHN ALLARD WAS THE PICTURE OF GUILT AS HE LEFT THE HALL OF JUSTICE. HE WANDERED TOWARD THE SPACE PORT AIMLESSLY ...









AAAKUS -- MASTER OF THE PLANETS OF OUTER SPACE, SMILED AS HE GREETED TWO BEINGS FROM THE NEXT PLANET ON HIS LIST TO BE DESTROYED...

THIS IS MORE THAN WORDS, AAAKUS! THE DEFENCE PLANS THAT YOU NEED TO ATTACK EARTH SUCCESSFULLY!

IF THEY ARE GENUINE, THEN I BELIEVE YOU! I WILL HAVE THEM EXAMINED!

I HAVE COME TO JOIN YOU, AAAKUS. I AM REALIST ENOUGH TO SEE THAT WE CANNOT STOP YOU!

IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN WORDS TO CONVINCE ME OF THAT, EARTHLING!

AN HOUR LATER...

YOU ARE ONE OF US, MAJOR! MY EXPERTS CONFIRMED THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE DOCUMENTS! WE WILL ATTACK AT ONCE!

OH! YOU... I BELIEVED IN YOU!

BE QUIET, ELENA! THIS IS NO TIME FOR SENTIMENTAL OUTBURSTS!

THE HUGE DARIAN SHIPS FILLED THE SKIES A MOMENT LATER! LEADING THE FLEET WAS AAKUS... AND WITH HIM WAS MAJOR JOHN ALLARD...

THIS IS THE WEAPON THAT WILL DESTROY EARTH! IJOL WILL SHOW YOU THROUGH IT! HE WILL FLY IT AND AIM IT BEFORE ESCAPING IN A SPACE SUIT! I GO TO THE BRIDGE -- WE ARE NEARING YOUR PLANET!

TIME TO LEAVE! I WILL BE LAUNCHED IN A MOMENT!

YOU CERTAINLY WILL!

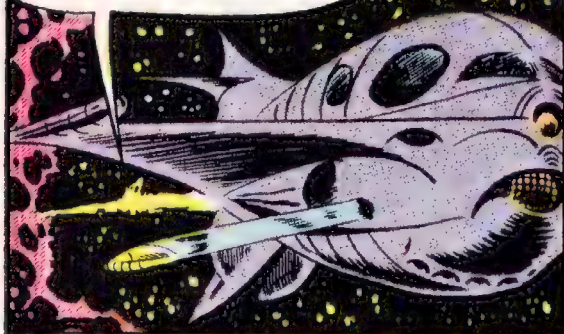
I MUST SEAL THE HA...

THIS OUGHT TO QUIET YOU DOWN TILL I FINISH MY LITTLE CHORE!



THINKING OF ELENA STILL ON THE MOTHER SHIP, MAJOR ALLARD GUIDED THE SPACE MISSILE ON HER LAST FLIGHT...

I'D INTENDED TO USE A PRESSURE SUIT AND ESCAPE BEFORE IT HITS -- BUT ELENA WILL BE DESTROYED! I'LL GO AT THE SAME TIME!



ELENA! YOU STOWED AWAY AGAIN! WHAT'S THE HEAT, RAY FOR?

FOR YOU -- IF YOU REALLY WERE A TRAITOR! COME ON, LET'S GIVE AAKUS A DOSE OF HIS OWN MEDICINE!

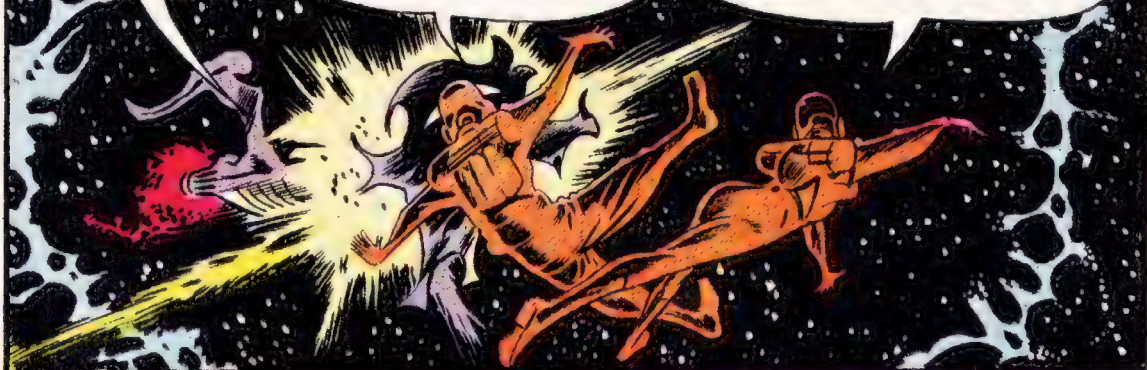


HASTILY DONNING SPACE SUITS, THE TWO THEN TURNED THE FLYING BOMB UNTIL IT WAS AIMED AT THE MAN WHO HAD BUILT IT! THEN THEY SLIPPED OUTSIDE...

MAJOR ALLARD, TURN AROUND OR...

THAT'S THE LAST OF AAKUS AND HIS PLANS TO CONQUER THE UNIVERSE!

YOU'RE WONDERFUL, JOHN! WAIT TILL ONE OF OUR SHIPS PICK US UP, I'LL REWARD YOU WITH A BIG KISS!



CONGRATULATIONS, MAJOR! EARTH WILL REWARD YOU WELL FOR YOUR WORK TODAY!

TELL EARTH TO LET ME ALONE! ALL I WANT IS A MONTH LEAVE SO MY FUTURE WIFE AND I CAN HAVE A HONEYMOON!



WONDERFUL -- I UNDERSTAND THE RESORT ON SATURN IS WONDERFUL!

SATURN, SHMATURN! I'LL TAKE NIAGARA FALLS!

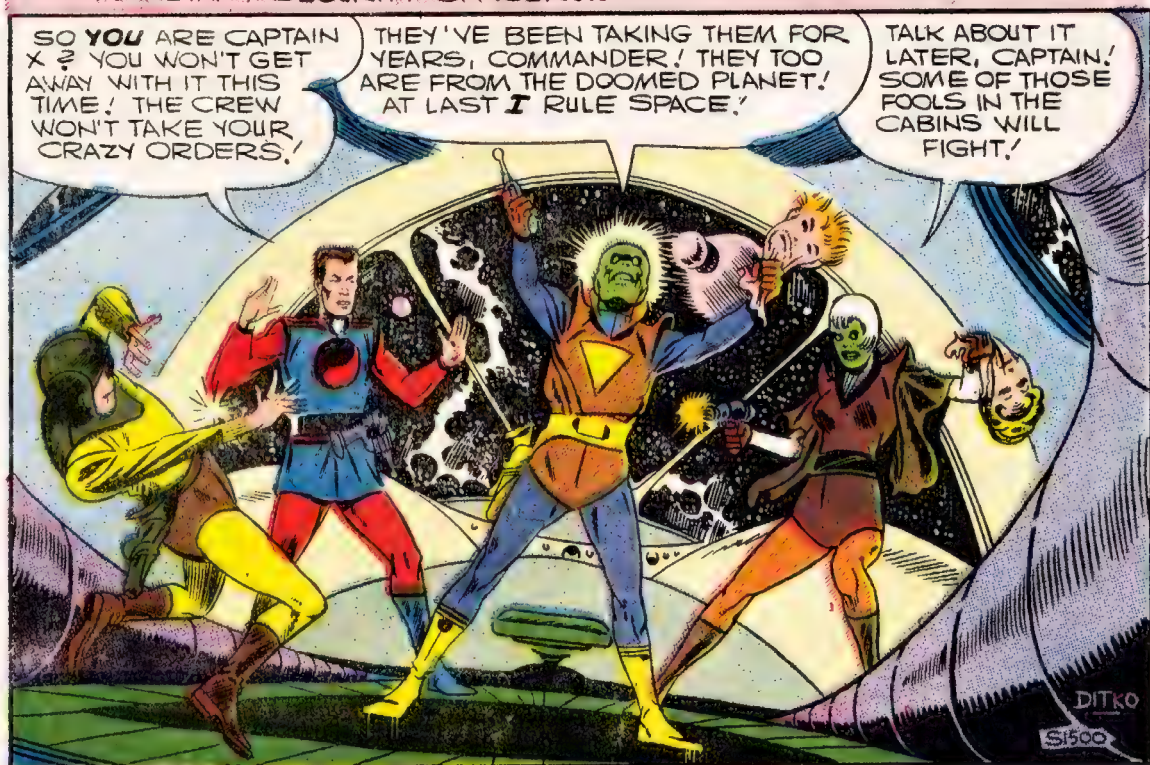


END



# THE SECRET OF CAPT. X

WHAT WAS THE TERRIBLE SECRET OF CAPTAIN X? HOW COULD HE STRIKE AGAIN AND AGAIN -- SNATCH HUGE, WELL ARMED SPACE SHIPS FROM THE UNIVERSE WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE? THE TERRIFIED LEADERS OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM HAD TO FIND OUT OR BE BOUND FOREVER TO THEIR OWN PLANETS! ONE MAN FACED THE TASK OF DEFYING CAPTAIN X -- COMMANDER DALLES, INTER-PLANETARY SECURITY OFFICER...



SO **YOU** ARE CAPTAIN X? YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT THIS TIME! THE CREW WON'T TAKE YOUR CRAZY ORDERS!

THEY'VE BEEN TAKING THEM FOR YEARS, COMMANDER! THEY TOO ARE FROM THE DOOMED PLANET! AT LAST **I** RULE SPACE!

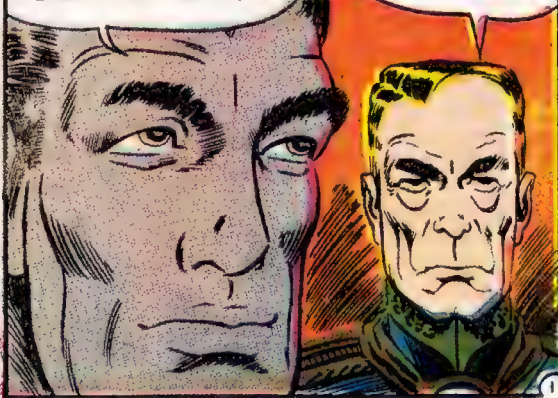
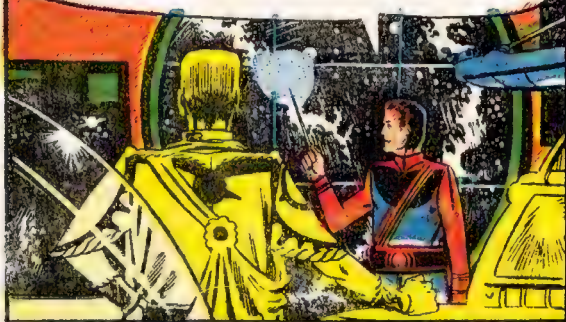
TALK ABOUT IT LATER, CAPTAIN! SOME OF THOSE FOOLS IN THE CABINS WILL FIGHT!

A MONTH BEFORE THAT, COMMANDER DALLES WAS CONFERRING WITH HIS SUPERIOR...

AT FIRST I WAS SURE THE SPACE PIRATES WERE FROM KORELLA, THE DOOMED PLANET! AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE IT QUARANTINED! THE POPULATION THERE IS RADIO-ACTIVE! THEY CANNOT LIVE IN CONTACT WITH THE REST OF US...

...BUT OUR PATROLS REPORT NO ACTIVITY THERE! NOT IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS! MAYBE THEY'RE ALL DEAD BY NOW!

PERHAPS-- BUT WE WILL KEEP THE PATROLS THERE JUST THE SAME!





THE NEWEST, FASTEST SPACE SHIP EVER BUILT WAS NEARING COMPLETION! IT WAS ON THIS THAT THE LEADERS OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM WERE TO HOLD THEIR MEETING CONCERNING CAPTAIN X ...

YES, COMMANDER, WE'RE ALMOST READY! HERE COME CAPTAIN KUNG LA AND HIS EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MARY LI, FROM TANUS, SISTER PLANET TO KORELLA!

HELLO, CAPTAIN! I'M DALLES, SECURITY CHIEF!

I KNOW! IT WILL BE GOOD HAVING YOU ABOARD, COMMANDER! IT WILL MAKE MARY AND ME FEEL MUCH SAFER!



WE WILL BE LOADED AND READY AT NOON TOMORROW! I HAVE NO FEAR OF THIS CAPTAIN X! NO SPACE SHIP BUILT CAN OVERTAKE US!



AT 12:01 THE NEXT DAY, THE MIGHTY SHIP FELT THE FIRST THRUST OF HER MIGHTY ROCKETS!



NICE BLAST-OFF, CAPTAIN! I'D BETTER GET BACK TO THE CABIN AND CALM OUR APPREHENSIVE GUESTS DOWN!

EXCELLENT, COMMANDER! GIVE THEM THE CAPTAIN'S REGARD'S!

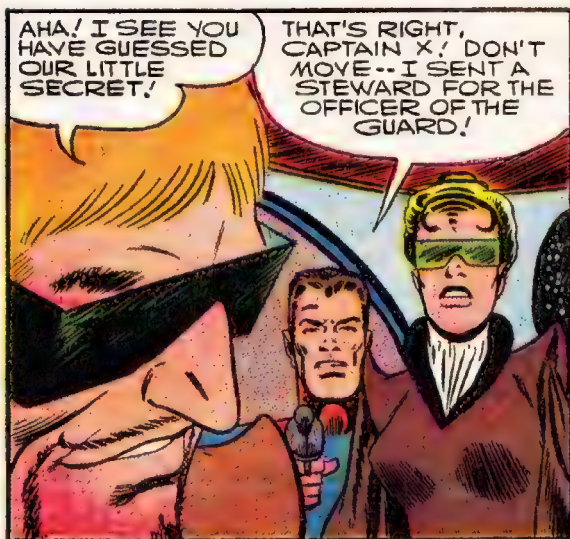


I WAS JUST TELLING THE MARTIAN DELEGATE THAT WE ARE SAFE FROM ANY OUTSIDE DANGER!

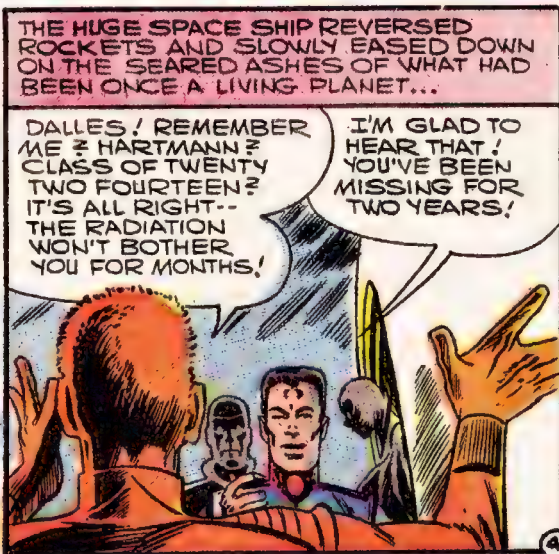
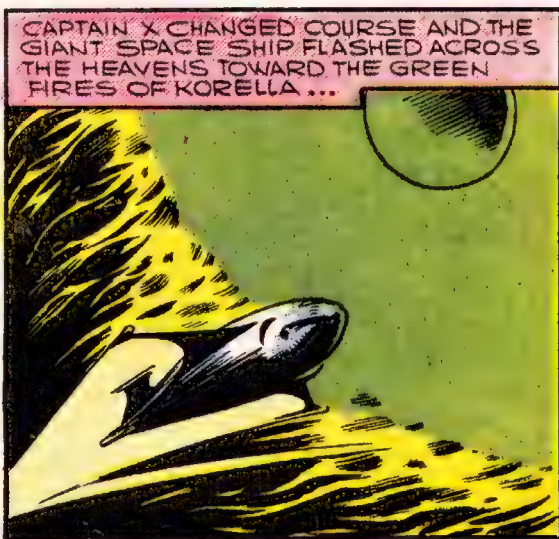
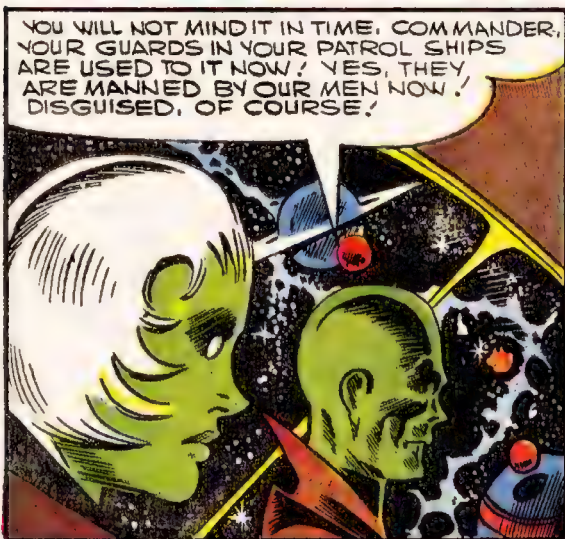
I AGREE, MARY! BUT JUST HOW SAFE THAT MAKES US, I'M NOT CERTAIN!



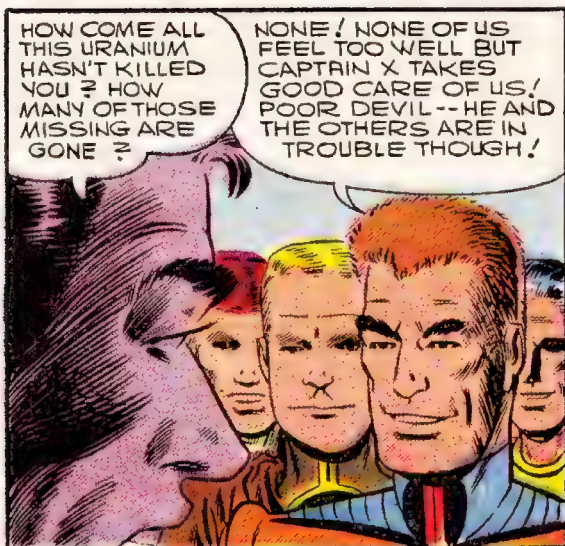












HOW COME ALL THIS URANIUM HASN'T KILLED YOU? HOW MANY OF THOSE MISSING ARE GONE?

NONE! NONE OF US FEEL TOO WELL BUT CAPTAIN X TAKES GOOD CARE OF US! POOR DEVIL -- HE AND THE OTHERS ARE IN TROUBLE THOUGH!



I DON'T GET IT, KUNG-LA! YOU'RE NOT AS HARD AS YOU WANT PEOPLE TO THINK! WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

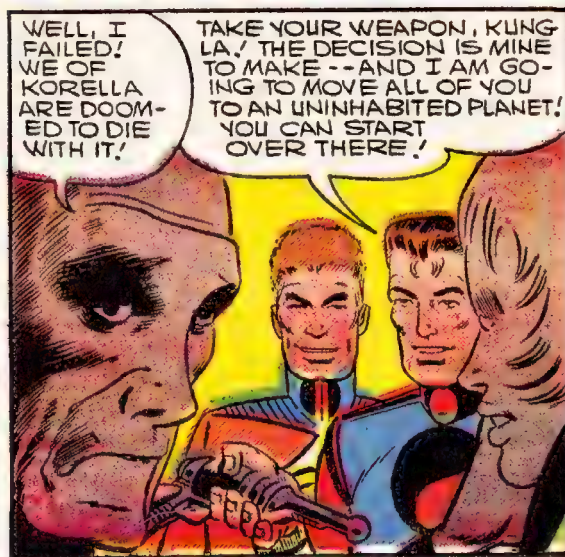
WE NEED HELP, DALLES! WE ASKED FOR IT AGAIN AND AGAIN! NOW, WE WILL TAKE IT! EVEN IF WE HAVE TO CAPTURE THE REST OF YOU TO DO IT!



GET HER GUN, HARTMANN! I'LL EXPLAIN LATER!

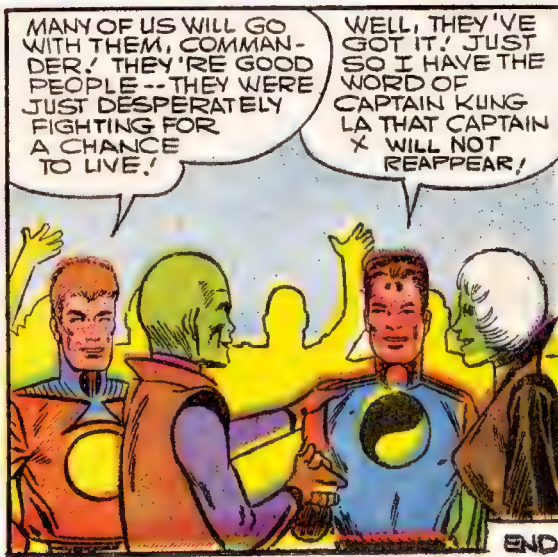
RIGHTO, DALLES! I'LL TAKE THAT, MISS LI!

NO! WE WON'T LET YOU SPOIL...



WELL, I FAILED! WE OF KORELLA ARE DOOMED TO DIE WITH IT!

TAKE YOUR WEAPON, KUNG-LA! THE DECISION IS MINE TO MAKE -- AND I AM GOING TO MOVE ALL OF YOU TO AN UNINHABITED PLANET! YOU CAN START OVER THERE!



MANY OF US WILL GO WITH THEM, COMMANDER! THEY'RE GOOD PEOPLE -- THEY WERE JUST DESPERATELY FIGHTING FOR A CHANCE TO LIVE!

WELL, THEY'VE GOT IT! JUST SO I HAVE THE WORD OF CAPTAIN KUNG-LA THAT CAPTAIN X WILL NOT REAPPEAR!





Mysteries of  
UNEXPLORED WORLDS

No 3

MYSTERIES  
OF



# UNEXPLORED WORLDS

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

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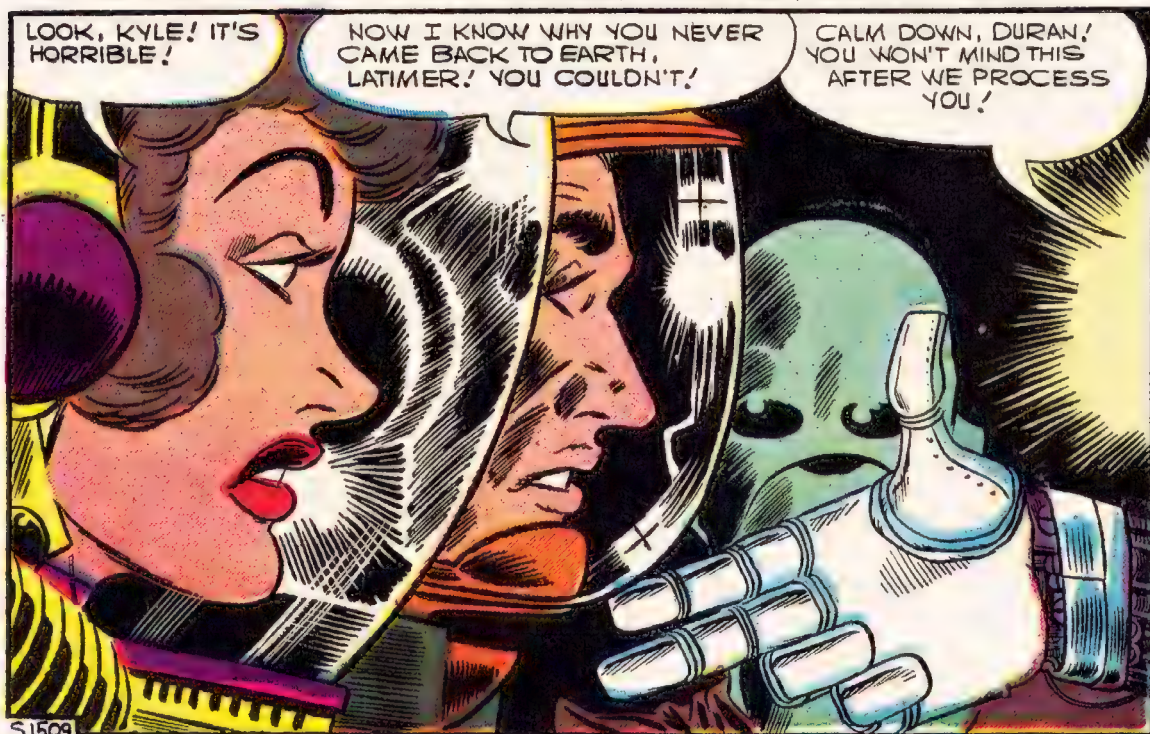


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# The **STRANGE** **GUESTS OF TSARUS**

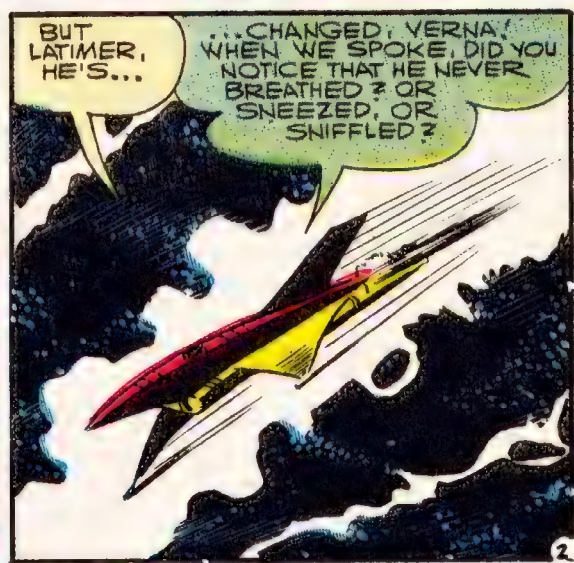
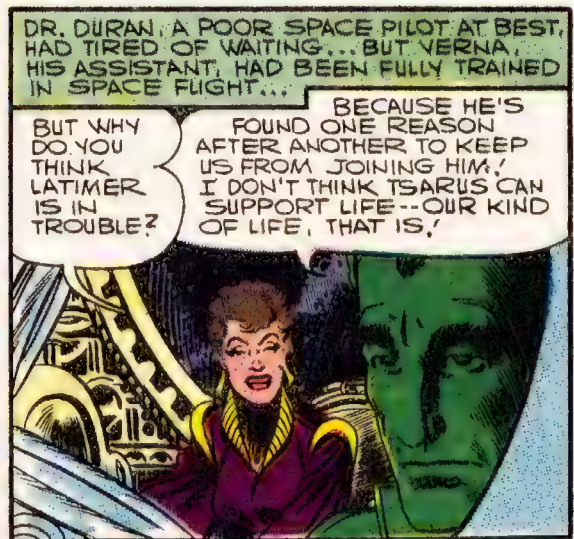
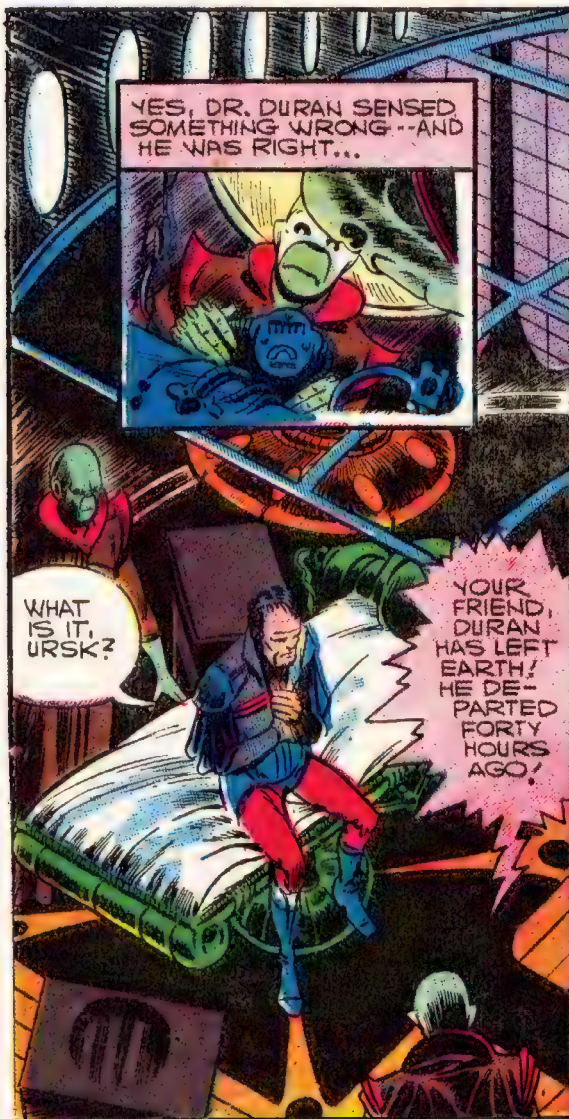
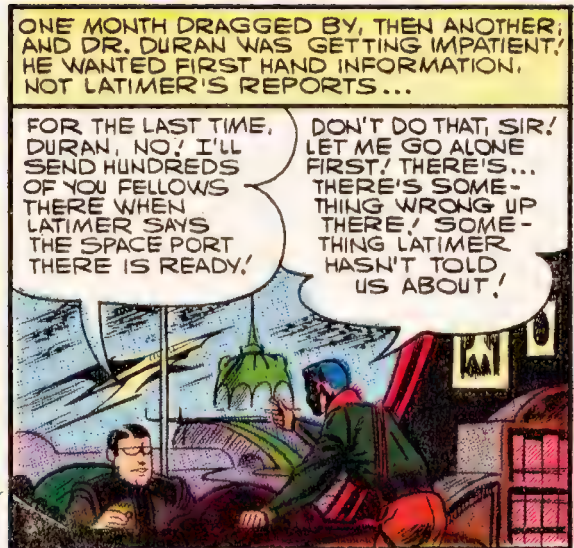
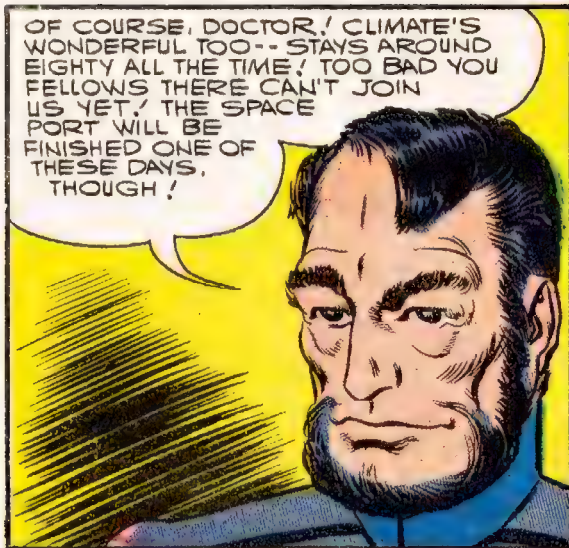
**I**N THE UNENDING SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNIVERSE AROUND US, THE SCIENTISTS OF ALL THE KNOWN WORLDS WERE PUZZLED BY A SMALL PLANET OUT PAST SATURN. INTREPID EXPLORERS WENT THERE... AND REPORTED FINDING CIVILIZATION, FRIENDLY BEINGS. OTHERS WHO FOLLOWED CONFIRMED IT! YET, DR. KYLE DURAN, WRITING A TEXTBOOK ON THE NEW NEIGHBOR FOUND ONE THING PUZZLING...



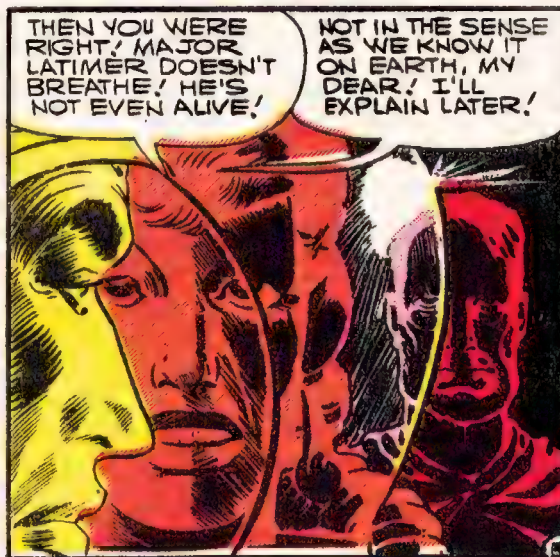
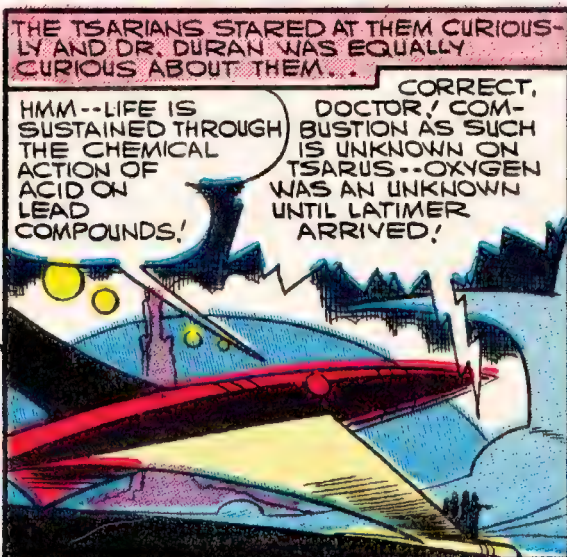
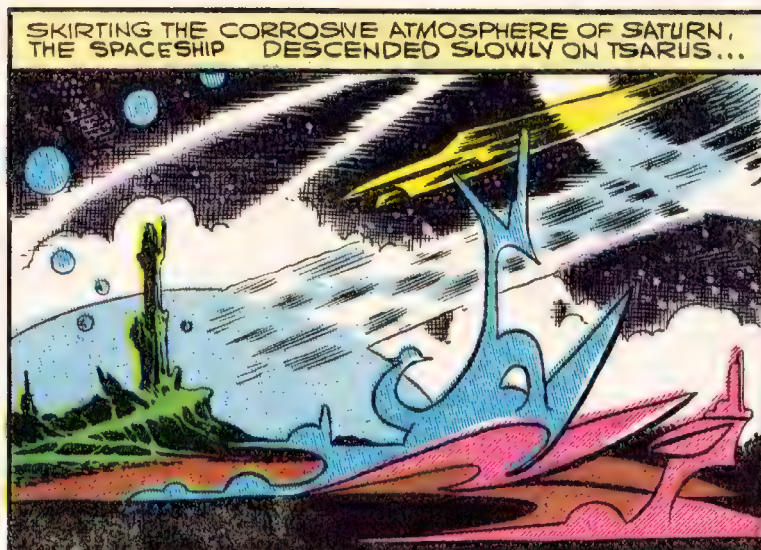
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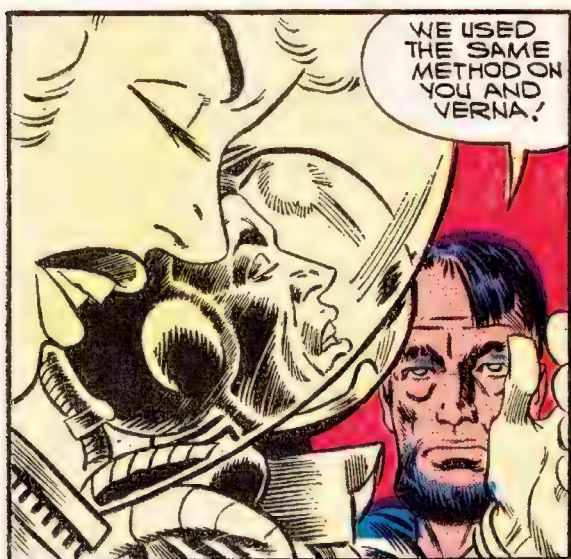
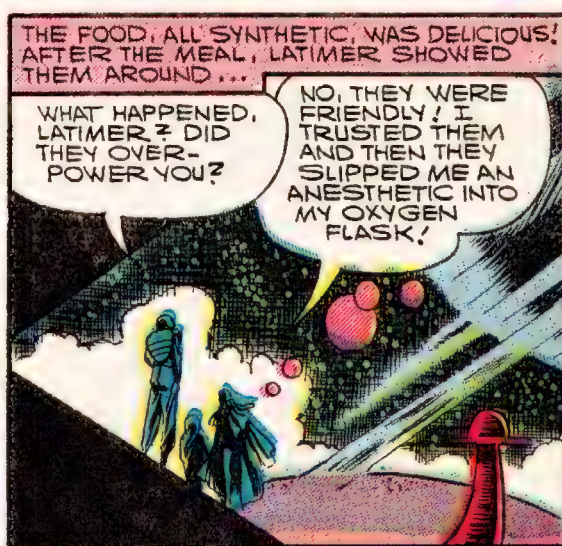
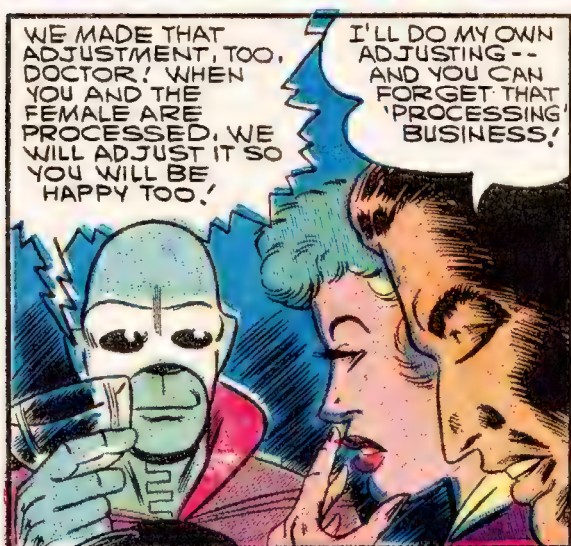
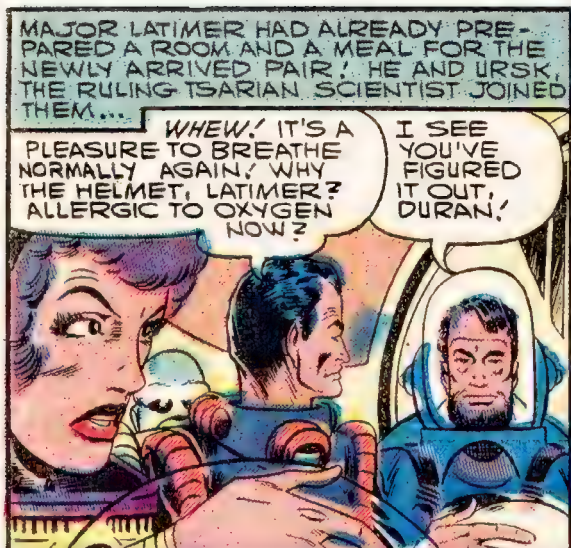




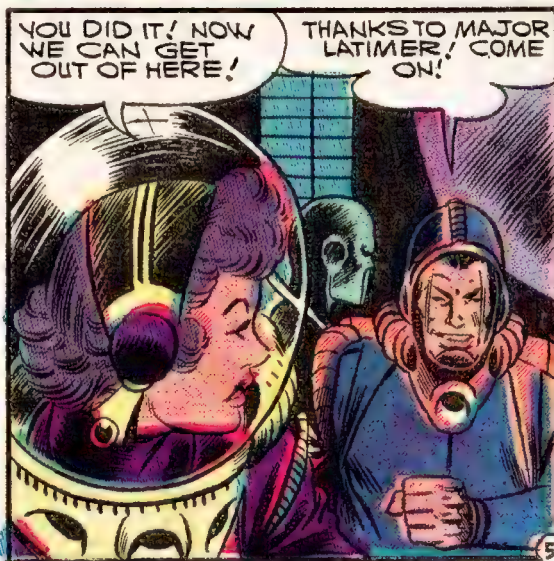
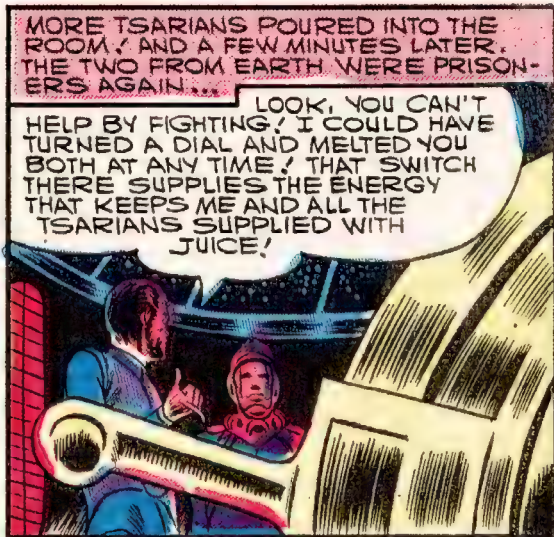
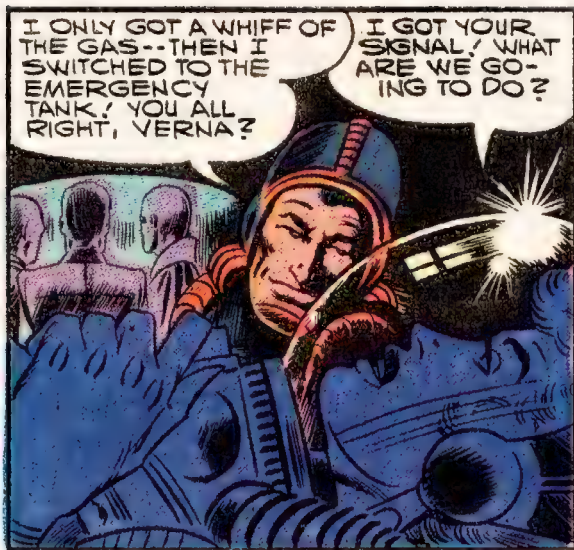




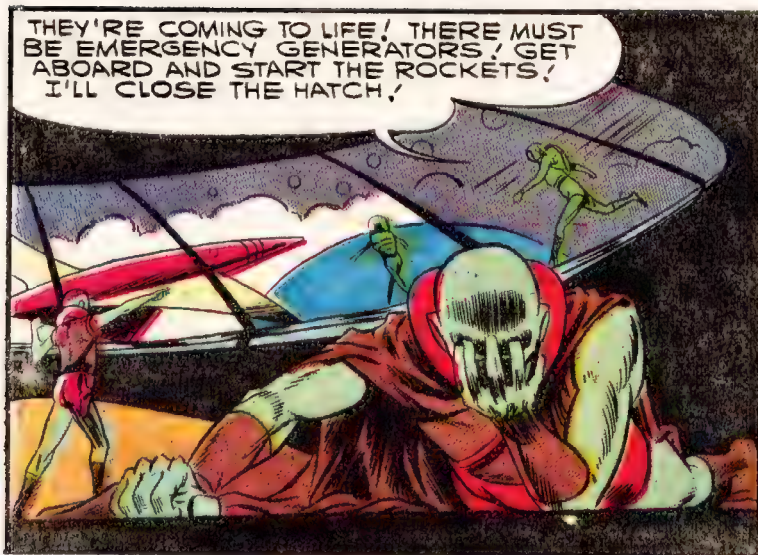










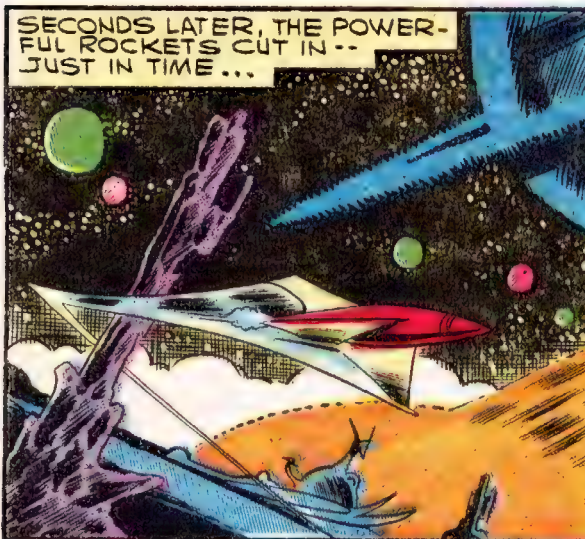


THEY'RE COMING TO LIFE! THERE MUST BE EMERGENCY GENERATORS! GET ABOARD AND START THE ROCKETS! I'LL CLOSE THE HATCH!



URSK COMMANDS YOU TO...

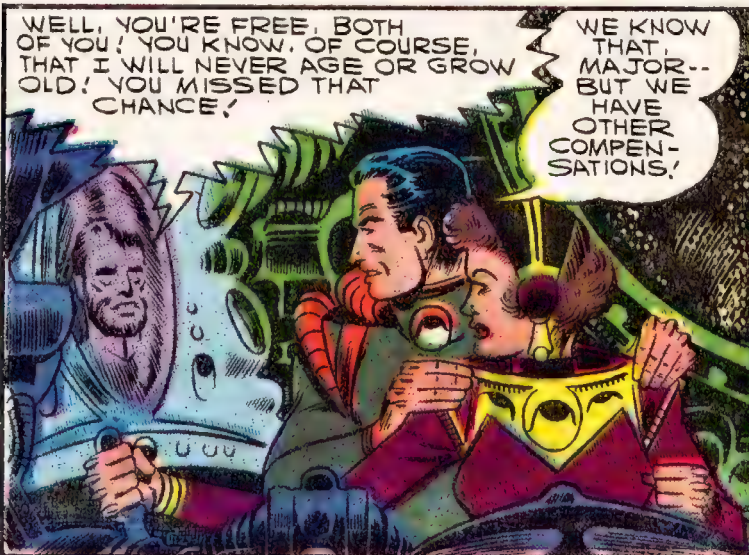
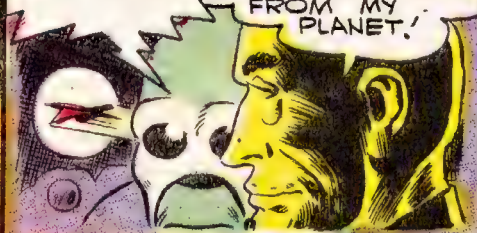
TELL URSK TO WRITE ME ABOUT IT! ADDRESS IT TO EARTH!



SECONDS LATER, THE POWERFUL ROCKETS CUT IN -- JUST IN TIME ...

YOU SEEM GLAD THEY ESCAPED! I ERRORED IN NOT REMOVING THE BRAIN AREA CONTROLLING SENTIMENT!

YOU LEFT ME LITTLE ENOUGH, URSK! YES, I'M GLAD THEY'RE GOING BACK! IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME -- BUT I'LL SEE THAT MY FATE DOESN'T BEFALL ANY OTHERS FROM MY PLANET!



WELL, YOU'RE FREE, BOTH OF YOU! YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, THAT I WILL NEVER AGE OR GROW OLD! YOU MISSED THAT CHANCE!

WE KNOW THAT, MAJOR-- BUT WE HAVE OTHER COMPENSATIONS!



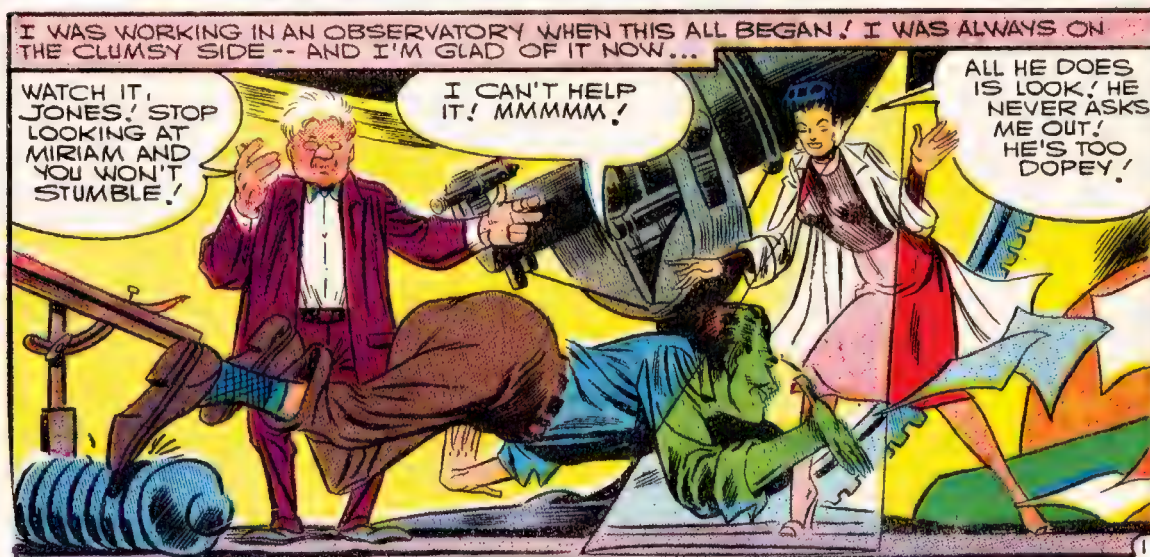
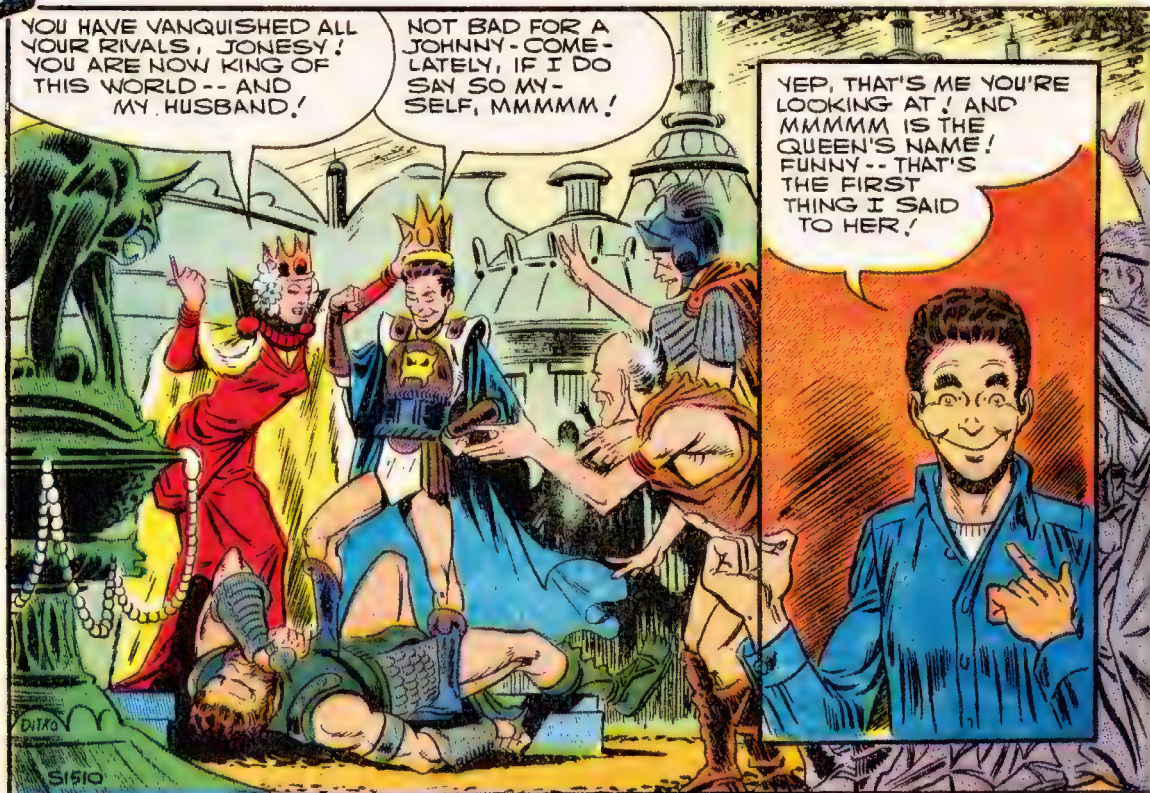
YES, I KNOW, DOCTOR-- AND I WISH YOU BOTH GREAT HAPPINESS, THE KIND I CAN NEVER KNOW!

END

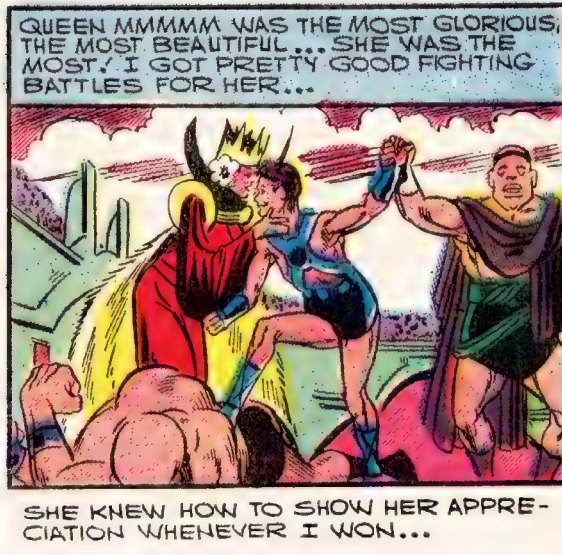
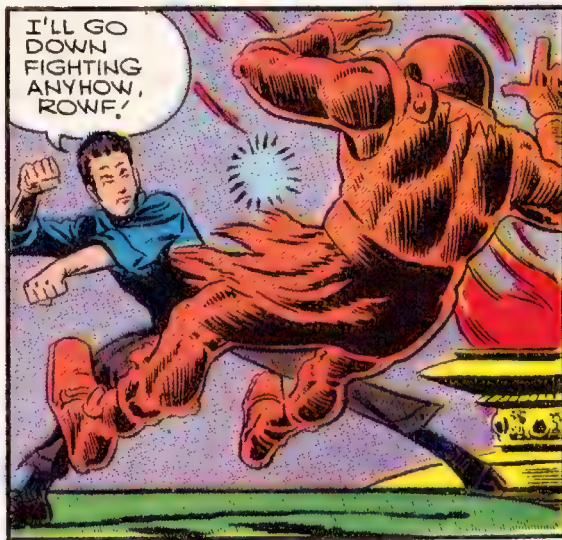
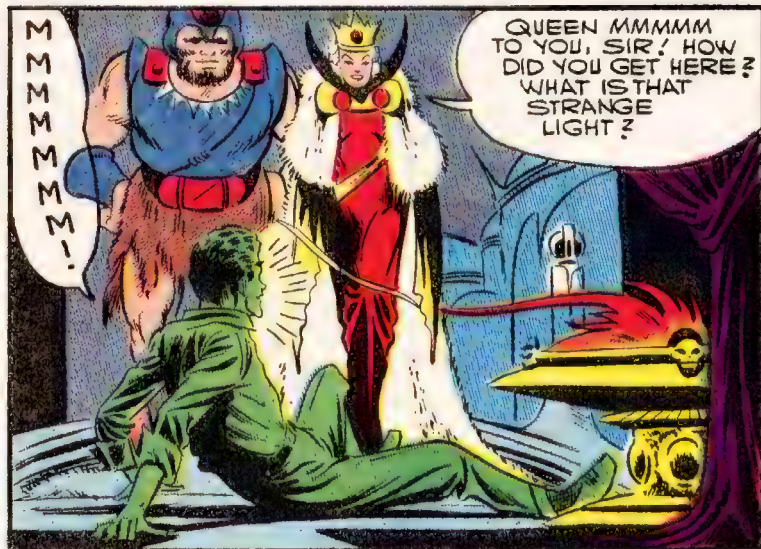


WHEN PEOPLE LOOK AT ME TODAY, THEY SEE BILL JONES -- NO TALLER THAN THE AVERAGE GUY, NO SMARTER. BUT I WAS KING ONCE, KING OF AN ENTIRE WORLD -- AND THE LOVELIEST GIRL IN THAT WORLD LOVED ME! IT WAS....

# A WORLD WHERE I WAS KING





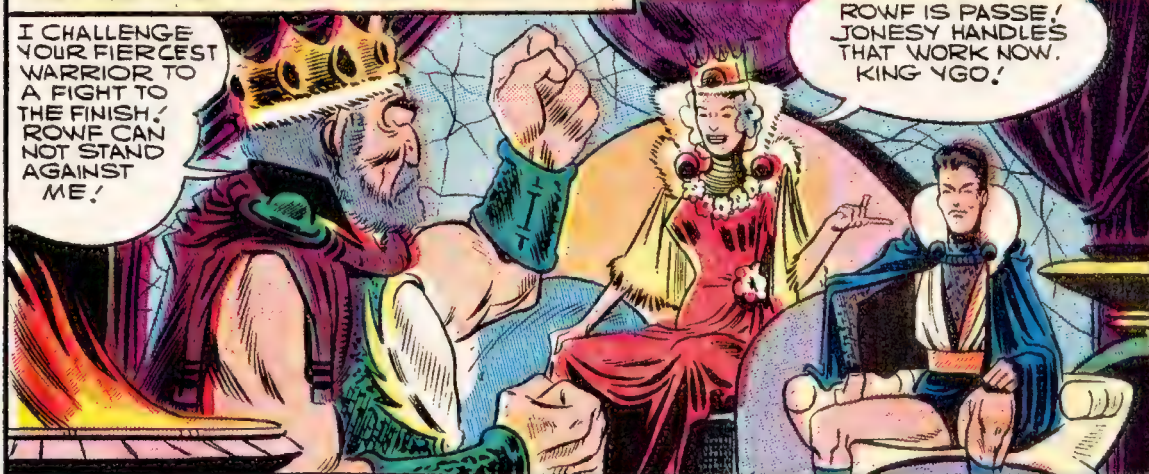




THEY HAD A PRETTY GOOD SYSTEM IN THAT WORLD! IF ANOTHER BUNCH GOT SORE AT MY QUEEN, THEY SENT OVER A CHALLENGE! THE KING DELIVERED IT PERSONALLY! THEY HAD PRETTY BIG KINGS THERE TOO...

I CHALLENGE YOUR FIERCEST WARRIOR TO A FIGHT TO THE FINISH! ROWF CAN NOT STAND AGAINST ME!

ROWF IS PASSE! JONESY HANDLES THAT WORK NOW. KING YGO!

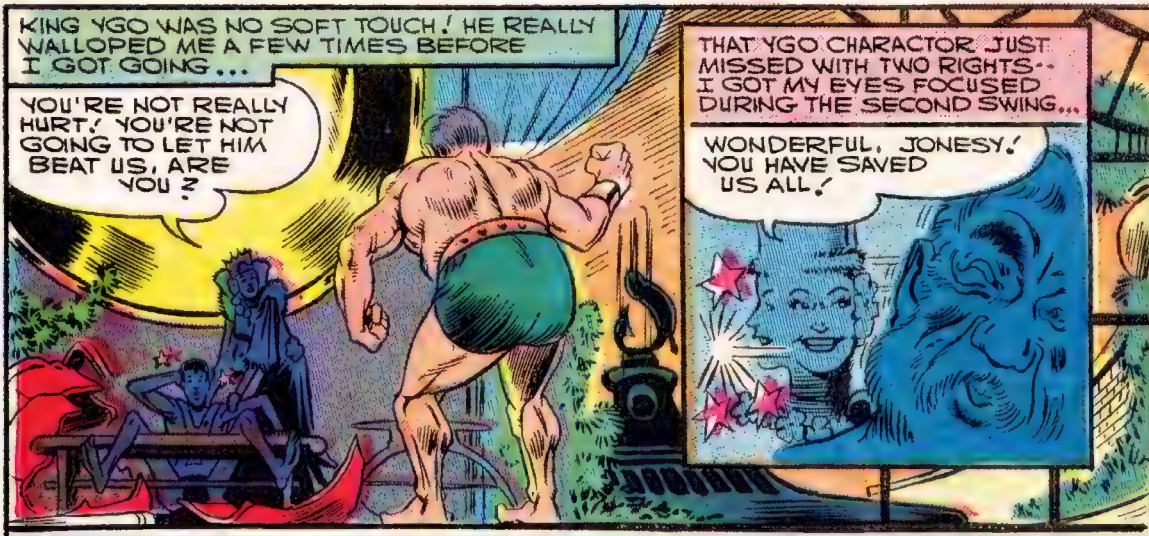


KING YGO WAS NO SOFT TOUCH! HE REALLY WALLOPED ME A FEW TIMES BEFORE I GOT GOING...

YOU'RE NOT REALLY HURT! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LET HIM BEAT US, ARE YOU?

THAT YGO CHARACTER JUST MISSED WITH TWO RIGHTS-- I GOT MY EYES FOCUSED DURING THE SECOND SWING...

WONDERFUL, JONESY! YOU HAVE SAVED US ALL!



YOU SHALL RECEIVE THE USUAL REWARD!

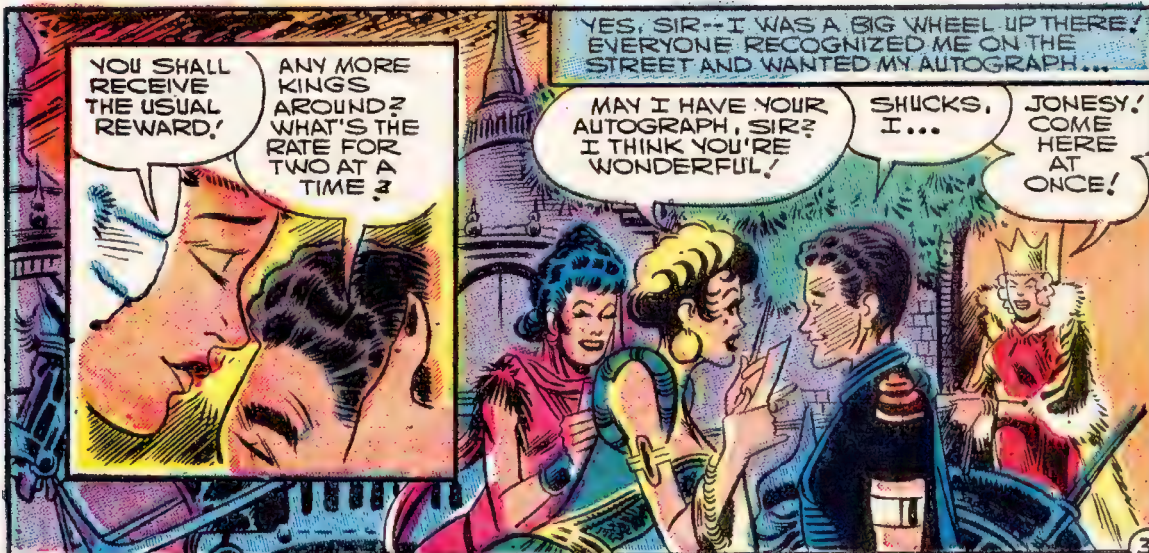
ANY MORE KINGS AROUND? WHAT'S THE RATE FOR TWO AT A TIME?

YES, SIR--I WAS A BIG WHEEL UP THERE! EVERYONE RECOGNIZED ME ON THE STREET AND WANTED MY AUTOGRAPH...

MAY I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH, SIR? I THINK YOU'RE WONDERFUL!

SHUCKS, I...

JONESY! COME HERE AT ONCE!

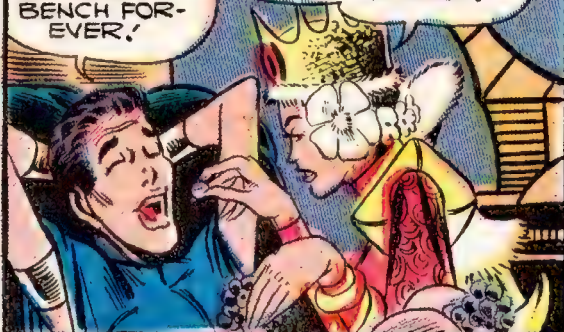




AFTER THAT AUTOGRAPH BUSINESS, I DIDN'T GET AROUND AS MUCH-- BUT I DIDN'T MIND BEING NEAR QUEEN M MMMM TOO MUCH...

GEE, YOU'RE SWELL, M MMMM, I COULD STAY ON THIS BENCH FOR-EVER.

YOU CAN'T! WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TROUBLE WITH THE OTHERS! THEY'RE GOING TO GANG UP ON US, JONESY!



WHAT? JUST WHEN THINGS WERE GOING ALONG NICE, TOO! I KNOW I HAVE NO RIGHT TO SAY IT, M MMMM, BUT I LOVE YOU... AW, SHUCKS!

I LOVE YOU TOO, JONESY! BEFORE THEY CAN ATTACK US, WE'LL BE MARRIED!



SHE MEANT IT TOO! ALL THE LOCAL BIG WHEELS WERE INVITED -- PLUS KING YGO AND OTHER OUT OF TOWN BIG SHOTS. WE WERE MARRIED ON THE PALACE STEPS. I WAS CROWNED KING...

LONG LIVE THE KING!

HE'S TECHNICALLY KING OF THE WHOLE WORLD NOW! HE'S ALREADY BEATEN ALL OF US ONCE AT LEAST! WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!

YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT I WON'T STAND FOR ANYTHING FAIR!

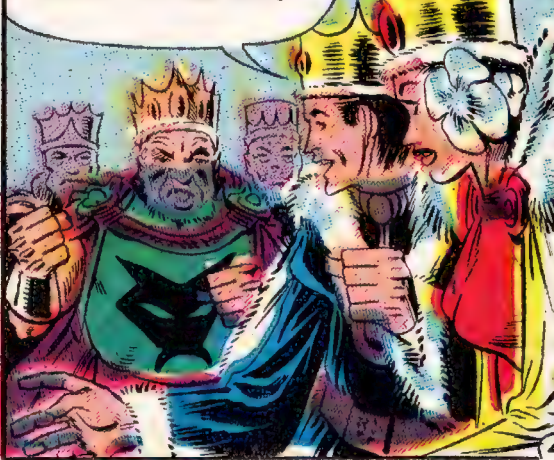


FOLLOW ME! WE'LL SETTLE HIM RIGHT NOW!

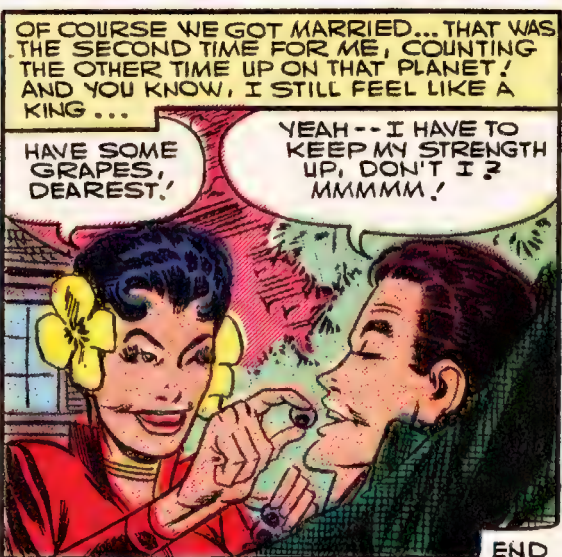
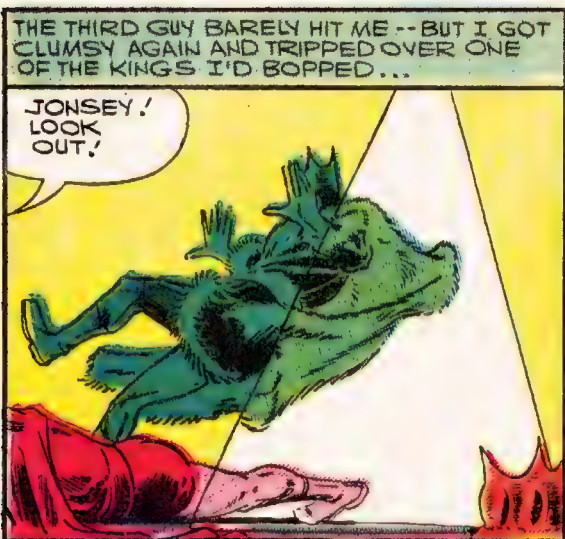
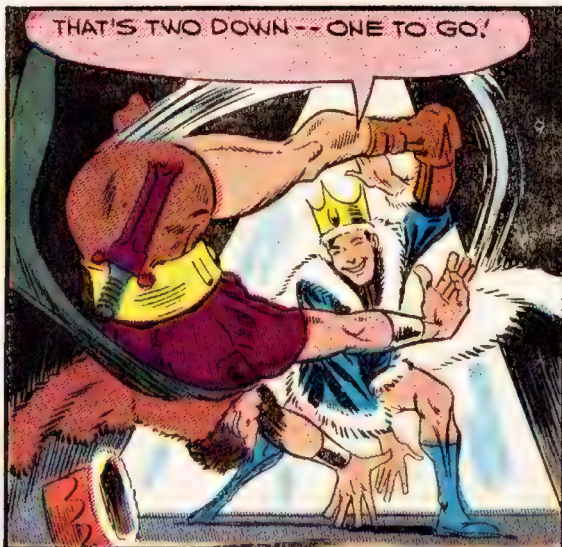
WATCH OUT FOR THE QUEEN! SHE'LL MAKE A LOVELY WIDOW!



LOOK OUT, HONEY, SOMEONE'S GOING TO GET HURT! I THINK IT'LL BE ME!





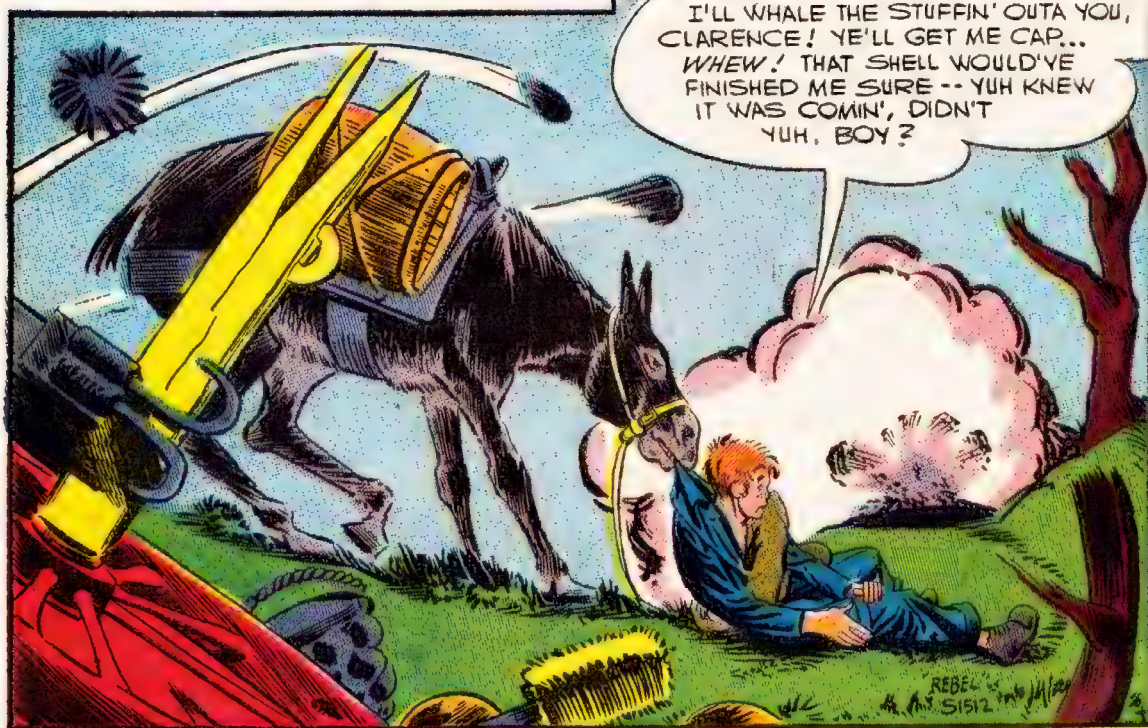


END



# GAVIN'S STUPID Mule

WHILE THE HORSE GOT ALL THE GLORY--CARRIED THE GENERALS IN THE PARADES, LED THE WILDLY EXCITING CAVALRY CHARGES--THE MULE DID THE DIRTY WORK, TOTING AMMUNITION, SUPPLIES, AND HAULING ARTILLERY! MOST ARMY MULES WERE PRETTY HEP... BUT GAVIN'S MULE WAS ONE OF THE MOST IDIOTIC EVER FOALD... IF YOU BELIEVE CAPTAIN GORDON! BUT IF YOU'VE TALKED TO PVT. PAT GARVIN OUTSIDE SHARPSBURG IN 1864, HE'D DISAGREE...



CLARENCE JOINED THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN 1862--THE SAME DAY THAT AN IRISH IMMIGRANT, PATRICK GAVIN WAS SWORN IN...

YOU'RE THE SLOP-PIEST SOLDIER I'VE EVER SEEN, GAVIN--AND THAT MULE IS THE STUPIDEST! YOU TWO BELONG TOGETHER!

WELL, NOW, CAPTAIN, HE'S A MITE OLD FOR THE WORK, BUT HE'S A HAND-SOME ANIMAL! I THINK I'LL CALL HIM CLARENCE!



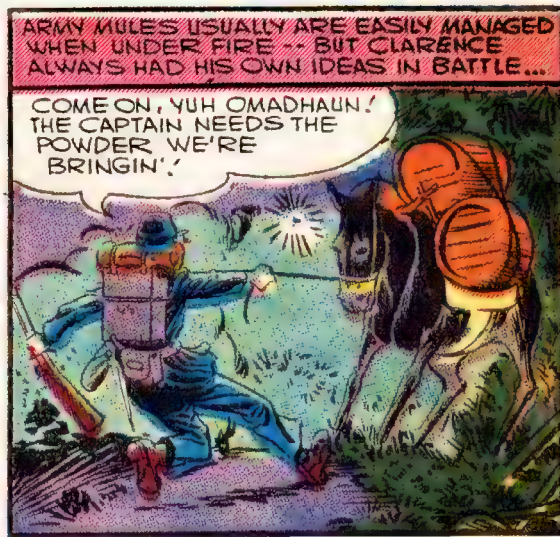
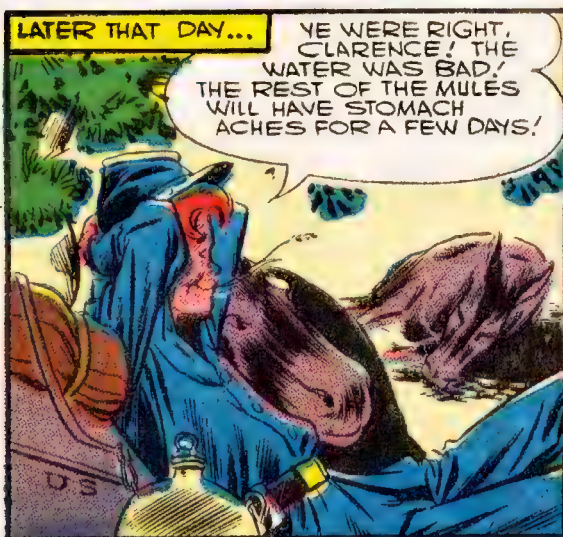
THAT DID IT! CLARENCE LOVED HIM INSTANTLY...

HE HALF KILLED TWO... DID YOU CALL HIM CLARENCE? YOU CAN'T! THAT'S MY NAME!

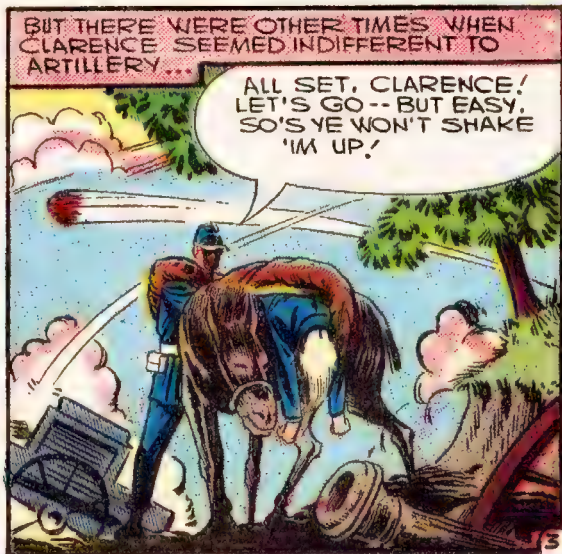
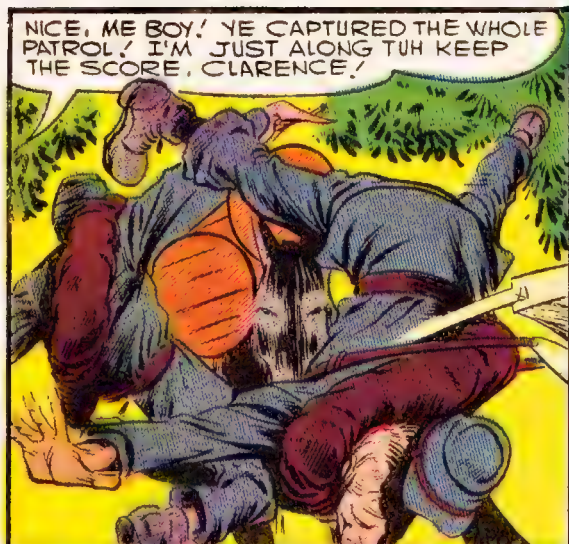
AN' A FINE MAN YE ARE, CLARENCE... I MEAN, CAPTAIN!









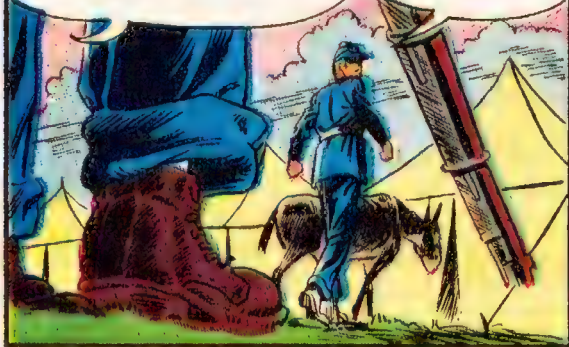




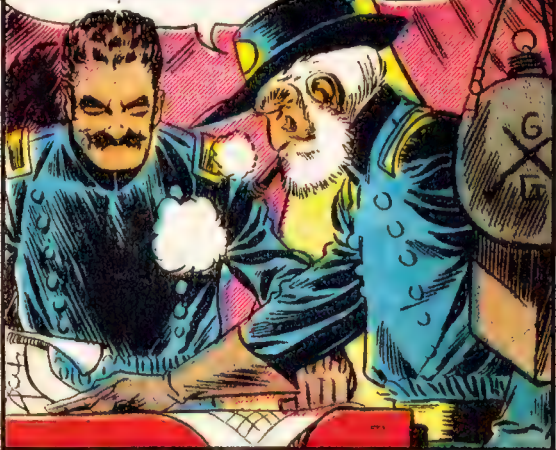
CLARENCE WAS MORE OR LESS THE COMPANY PET! THE OTHER MULES THAT STARTED OUT WITH CLARENCE WERE ALL GONE AFTER TWO YEARS...

HEY, GAVIN-- DON'T GO NEAR MAJOR GORDON'S TENT! THE GENERAL'S THERE!

I DON'T MIND IF CLARENCE DON'T, BILL! HE'S NO SNOB!



WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE ACROSS THIS FIELD-- YOU OCCUPY THIS FARMHOUSE AND PROTECT OUR FLANK, MAJOR!



NOW BE SURE TO... MAJOR, WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?!



THIS IS THE LAST STRAW, GAVIN! I'LL SEE THAT...

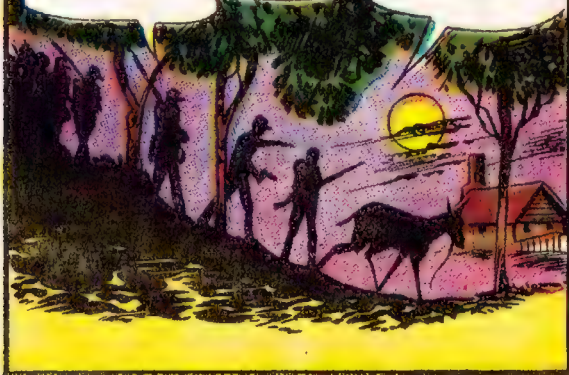
WHOA, MAJOR! THIS MUST BE CLARENCE! I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT GAVIN'S MULE! CAN HE READ MAPS TOO, GAVIN?



THE REGIMENT MASSED FOR AN ATTACK THAT NIGHT-- MAJOR GORDON'S COMPANY HAD TO FIND THE FARMHOUSE IN THE DARK...

THERE'S THE FARMHOUSE AHEAD! I DON'T SEE HOW CLARENCE EVER LED US HERE!

HE SAW THE MAP, RE-MEMBER, SIR?



THE CONFEDERATES WERE SUSPICIOUSLY QUIET AS THE UNION SOLDIERS STARTED ACROSS THE FIELDS...

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG! SEARCH THOSE WOODS, GAVIN!

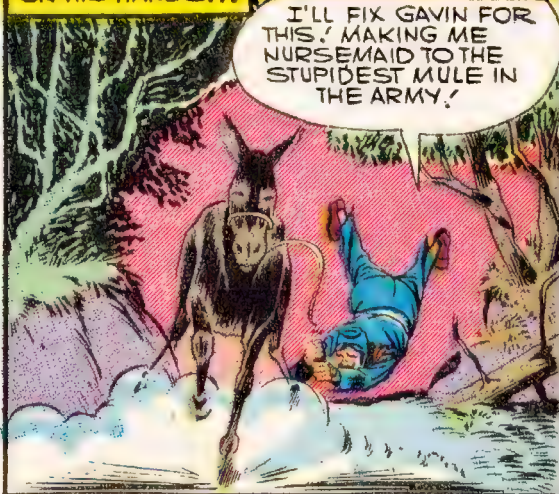
YES, SIR! LOOK AFTER CLARENCE, SIR!







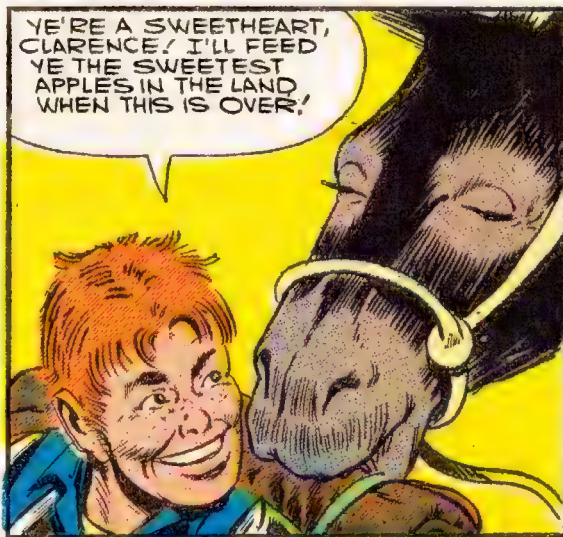
MEANWHILE, MAJOR GORDON HAD TROUBLE ON HIS HANDS...



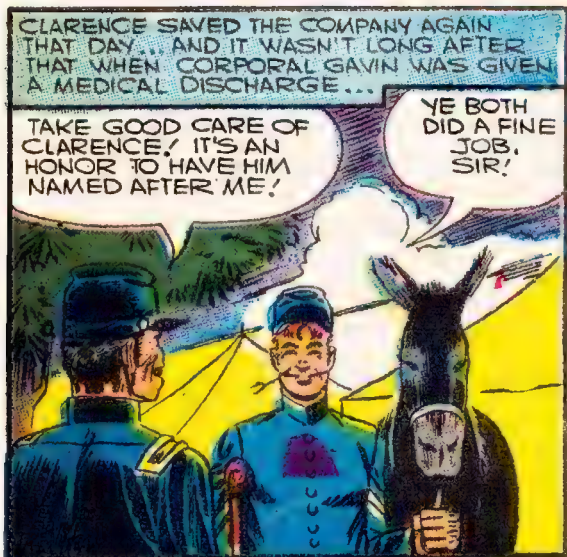
I'LL FIX GAVIN FOR THIS! MAKING ME NURSEMAID TO THE STUPIDEST MULE IN THE ARMY!



THE YANKS KNOW WE'RE HERE! DON'T LET THAT ONE GET AWAY!



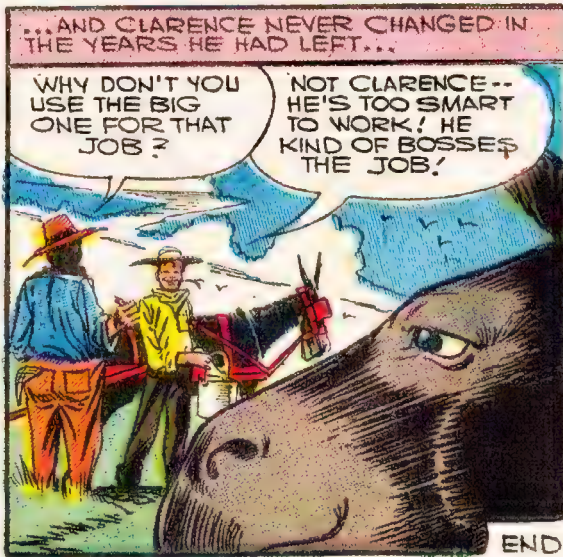
YE'RE A SWEETHEART, CLARENCE! I'LL FEED YE THE SWEETEST APPLES IN THE LAND WHEN THIS IS OVER!



CLARENCE SAVED THE COMPANY AGAIN THAT DAY... AND IT WASN'T LONG AFTER THAT WHEN CORPORAL GAVIN WAS GIVEN A MEDICAL DISCHARGE...

TAKE GOOD CARE OF CLARENCE! IT'S AN HONOR TO HAVE HIM NAMED AFTER ME!

YE BOTH DID A FINE JOB, SIR!



...AND CLARENCE NEVER CHANGED IN THE YEARS HE HAD LEFT...

WHY DON'T YOU USE THE BIG ONE FOR THAT JOB?

NOT CLARENCE-- HE'S TOO SMART TO WORK! HE KIND OF BOSSES THE JOB!

END



WAS IT A DREAM? A NIGHTMARE? OR WAS THIS FIERY WORLD SAM CULLEN FOUND HIMSELF IN A REALITY? COULD MAN BORN OF WOMEN SURVIVE THE SEARING HEAT OF THE SUB-WORLD? ONLY ONE MAN KNOWS AND EVEN HE IS NOT SURE THAT HE WAS EVER IN ...

# A FORGOTTEN WORLD

I AM YOUR CHIEF! BRING THE SURFACE MAN TO ME! OUR LAW DATES BACK TO THE LAST ICE AGE. INTRUDERS MUST FEEL THE FLAME THAT GIVES LIFE!

NO! I WON'T TELL! THEY'LL NEVER KNOW THAT YOU'RE DOWN HERE FROM ME!

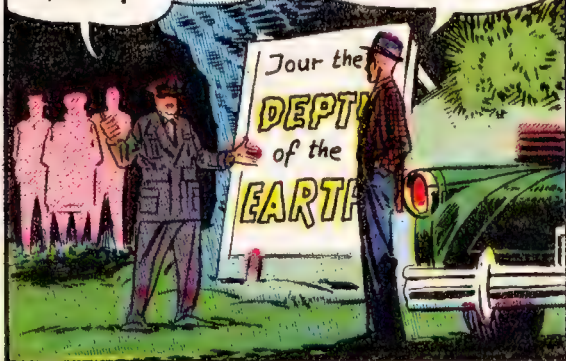
NO, KOAG! DON'T DO IT!



THAT'S PART OF SAM CULLEN'S DREAM! HERE'S THE REST OF IT AS THE YOUNG EXECUTIVE REMEMBERS IT...

GUIDED TOUR THREE DOLLARS, MISTER! THERE'S A PARTY LEAVING RIGHT AWAY!

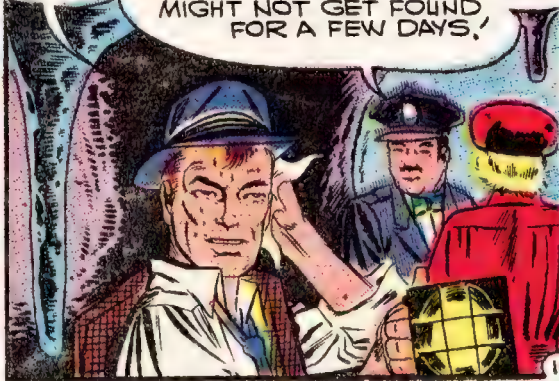
I MAY AS WELL! MY VACATION'S BEEN PRETTY DULL SO FAR!



THE CAVE WAS COOL AT FIRST--BUT IT GOT WARMER AS THE GROUP WENT DEEPER INTO THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH...

IT'S SURE HOT!

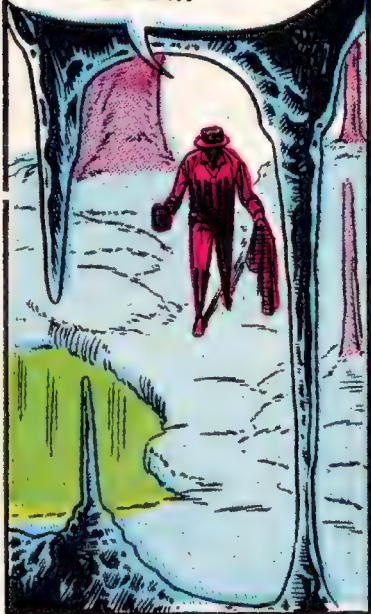
WE THINK THERE'S WARM SPRINGS SOMEWHERE DOWN HERE! DON'T GET LOST FROM THE GROUP, MISTER! YOU MIGHT NOT GET FOUND FOR A FEW DAYS!





THE WEIRD BEAUTY OF THE UNDERGROUND GALLERIES HELD CULLEN SPELLBOUND! HE DIDN'T NOTICE THAT HE WAS ALONE AT FIRST...

BEAUTIFUL! JUST BEYOND THAT PINK ROCK THERE'S ANOTHER CAVE...



THERE WAS ANOTHER ROOM -- AND AFTER THAT ONE, ANOTHER -- AND ANOTHER...

IT'S SO HOT I CAN HARDLY STAND IT BUT THIS IS WORTH... WHAT'S THAT? THAT SINGING?



THAT VOICE -- IT'S BEAUTIFUL! WHOEVER IT IS COULD SING IN BIG TIME OPERA!

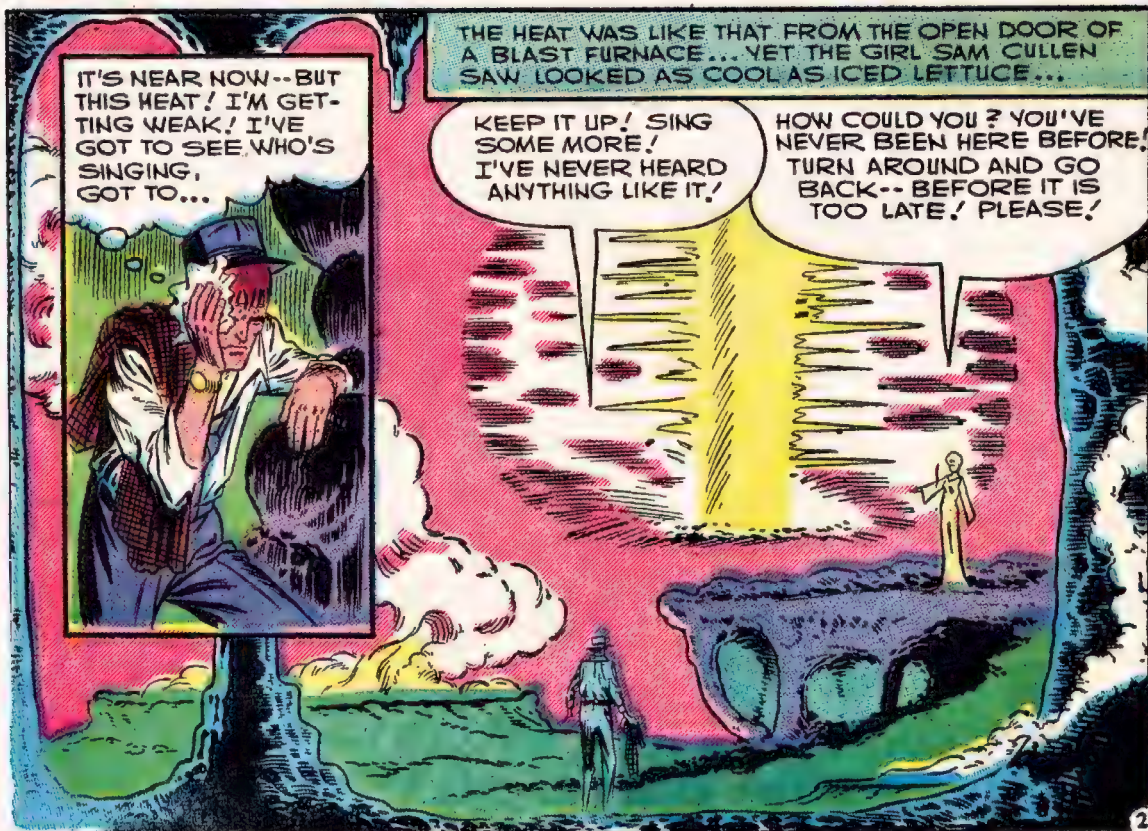
IT'S NEAR NOW -- BUT THIS HEAT! I'M GETTING WEAK! I'VE GOT TO SEE WHO'S SINGING, GOT TO...



THE HEAT WAS LIKE THAT FROM THE OPEN DOOR OF A BLAST FURNACE... YET THE GIRL SAM CULLEN SAW LOOKED AS COOL AS ICED LETTUCE...

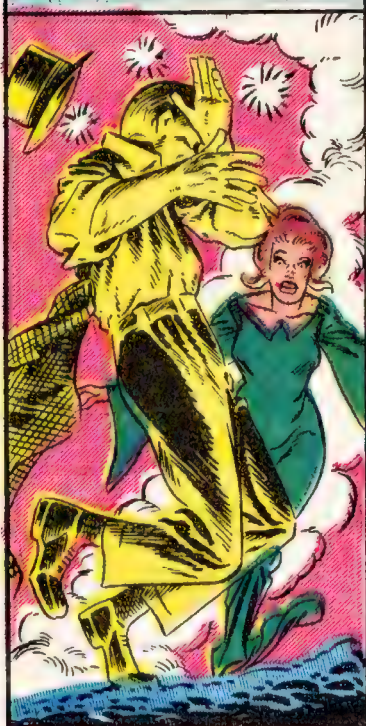
KEEP IT UP! SING SOME MORE! I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYTHING LIKE IT!

HOW COULD YOU? YOU'VE NEVER BEEN HERE BEFORE! TURN AROUND AND GO BACK -- BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE! PLEASE!

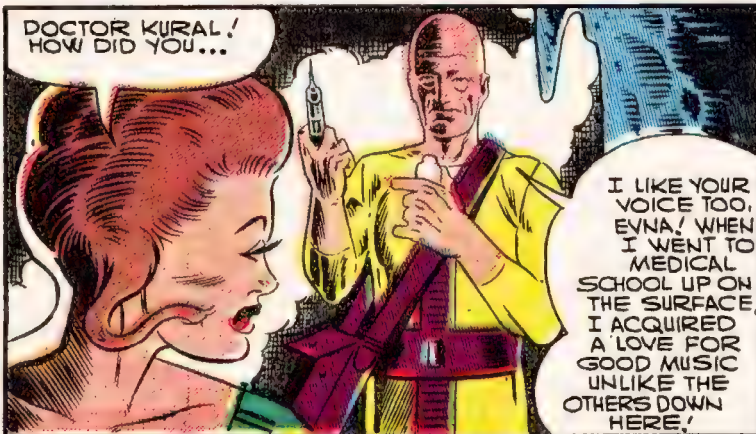




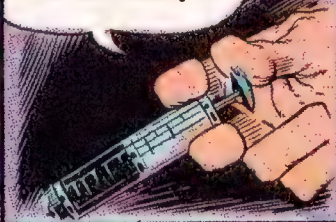
THERE WAS A COMPELLING QUALITY IN HER PLEA! SAM GULLEN TURNED TO GO BACK TO HIS OWN COOL WORLD BUT...



DOCTOR KURAL!  
HOW DID YOU...



IN A FEW MINUTES,  
HE'LL BE AS IMMUNE  
TO OUR HEAT AS WE ARE!



THE HEAT GO... SAY IT  
ISN'T HOT DOWN HERE  
ANY MORE!

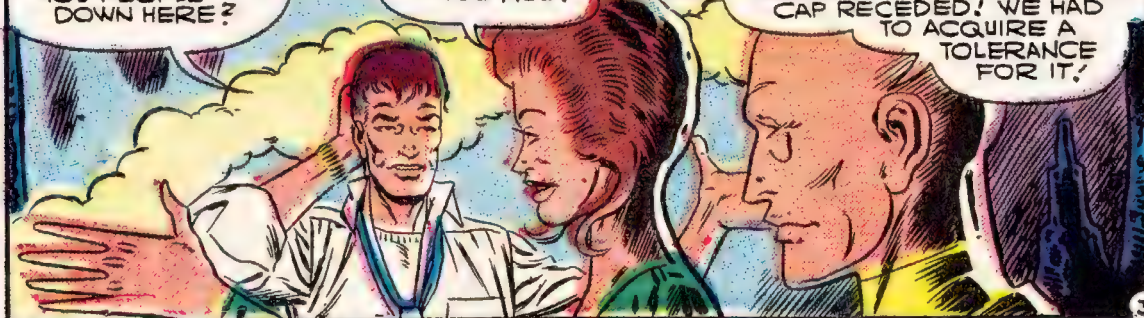
IT'S JUST AS WARM--  
I JUST RAISED YOUR  
BODY TEMPERATURE  
A LITTLE!



I DON'T GET IT!  
WHAT BROUGHT  
YOU PEOPLE  
DOWN HERE?

OUR PEOPLE HAVE LIVED  
HERE SINCE THE  
ICE AGE!

AND A LITTLE HEAT WAS A NICE  
THING THEN, SIR! IT GOT  
WARMER AS THE GREAT ICE  
CAP RECEDED! WE HAD  
TO ACQUIRE A  
TOLERANCE  
FOR IT!





AS THEY WALKED, SAM SAW STRANGE BUILDINGS,  
A WIDE AVENUE LED TOWARD A HUGE, FIERY  
COLUMN EXTENDING FROM THE FLOOR TO THE  
ROOF LOST IN THE PINK HAZE HIGH OVERHEAD...

WHY THE DOMED  
HOUSES, DOCTOR?  
YOU NEED NO  
SHELTER FROM  
COLD OR  
RAIN DOWN  
HERE!

THEY SERVE AS  
INSULATION DURING  
THE WARM SEASON!  
TEMPERATURES  
THEN GO TO SEVEN  
HUNDRED DEGREES!  
DECEEDLY UN-  
COMFORTABLE!

WHO'S THIS  
KOAG? IN-  
CIDENTALLY,  
MY NAME  
IS SAM  
CULLEN!

I AM  
CALLED  
EVNA!  
KOAG  
IS OUR  
CHIEF! HE  
WILL DECIDE  
YOUR FATE!  
OH, SAM--  
WHY DID  
YOU STAY?

KOAG MUST KNOW THIS!  
AN INTRUDER IS  
AMONGST US!

I...I  
COULDN'T  
LEAVE!  
NOT ONCE  
I'D SEEN  
YOU, EVNA!

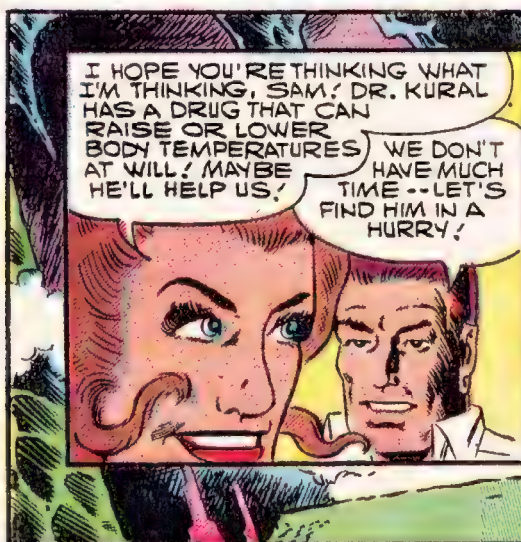
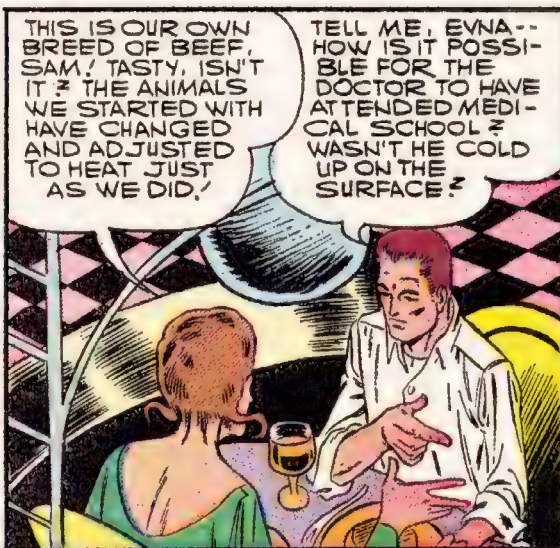
SAVE THAT,  
YOU TWO!  
DON'T ANGER  
KOAG NOW!  
IT'S BAD  
ENOUGH AS  
IT IS!

WHO IS THIS? ONE OF YOUR SURFACE FRIENDS,  
DOCTOR? HAVE YOU  
TOLD HIM HIS FATE,  
ACCORDING TO TRIBAL  
LAW?

OH, NO, KOAG!  
SPARE HIM! DOCTOR  
KURAL HAS A PLAN!  
THE PILLAR OF FIRE  
IS NOT NEEDED  
FOR HIM!

DON'T BEG  
ANYTHING FROM  
THAT HALF BAKED  
CHARACTER,  
EVNA!



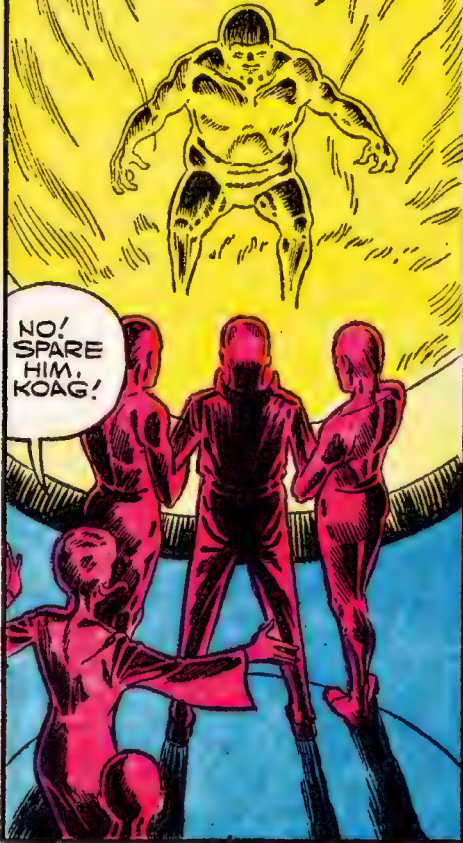




ACCORDING TO TRIBAL CUSTOM, ALL WANDERERS FROM THE EARTH'S SURFACE MUST DIE BY THE FIRE! KOAG GAVE THE SIGNAL...

NOW! GIVE HIM TO ME! THE OTHERS WILL FOLLOW!

NO! SPARE HIM, KOAG!



DO YOU FEEL THE HEAT? THE FLAMES WHICH GIVE US LIFE? EVEN I, KEEPER OF THIS FLAME, CANNOT SUFFER IT LONG!

I'M NOT GOING TO STAY LONG EITHER!



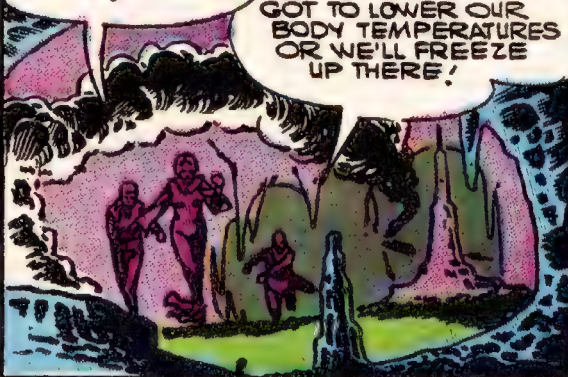
WONDERFUL, SAM! GET BACK, QUICKLY!



THE GUARDS WERE STUNNED FOR A SECOND... A SECOND THAT GAVE THE DOOMED THREE TIME ENOUGH TO SPRINT FOR THE TUNNEL LEADING UPWARD...

HURRY, DOCTOR! THEY'RE AFTER US!

STOP FOR A MOMENT AT THE ENTRANCE! I'VE GOT TO LOWER OUR BODY TEMPERATURES OR WE'LL FREEZE UP THERE!



LATER, AFTER OTHER CLOTHES HAVE BEEN OBTAINED...

NO NEED TO ASK YOU TWO YOUR PLANS! AS FOR ME, I'M GOING BACK TO MY OLD MEDICAL SCHOOL AND WORK ON TROPICAL MEDICINE!

YOU SHOULD BE AN EXPERT ON IT, DOCTOR! CHILLY UP HERE, ISN'T IT?

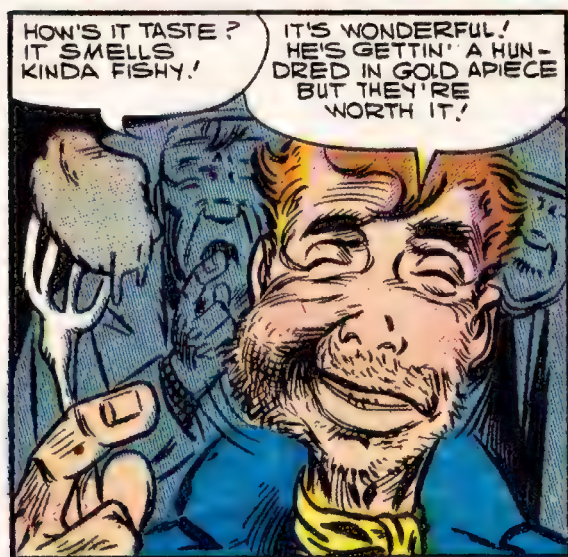
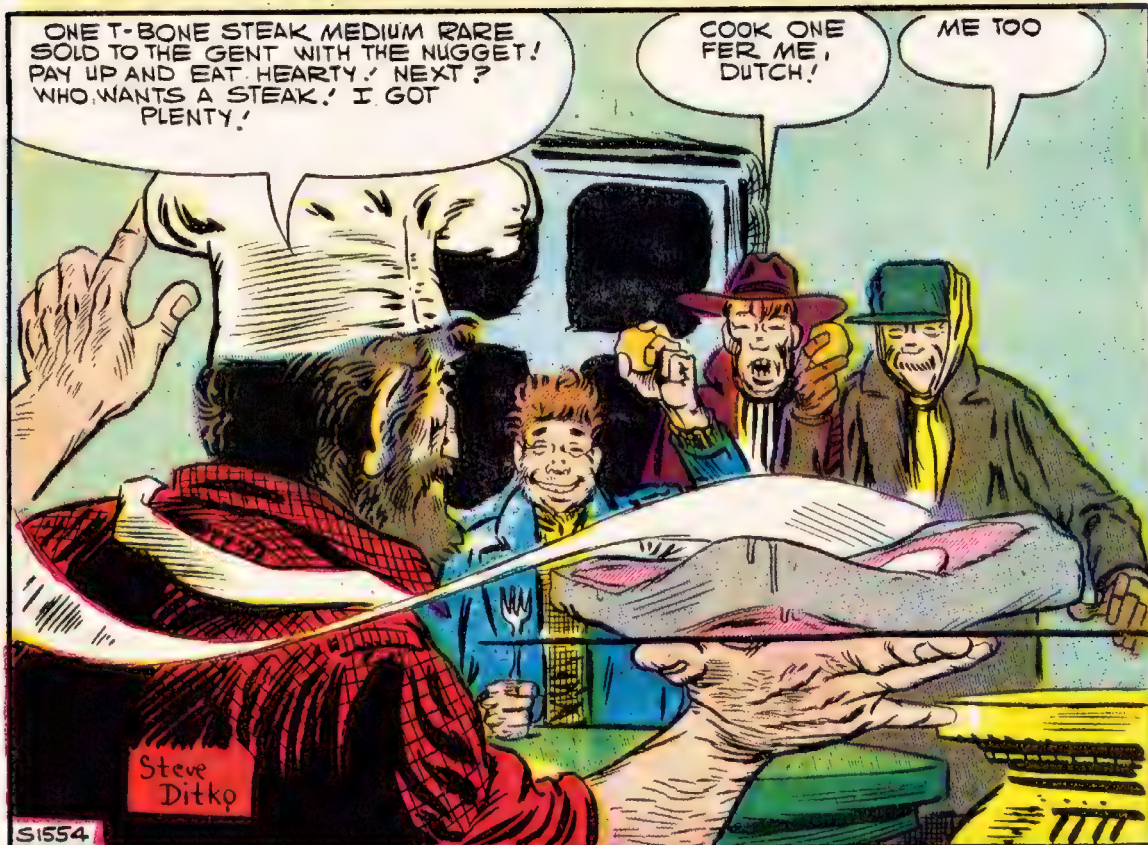


END



# THE CHEAPEST STEAK IN NOME

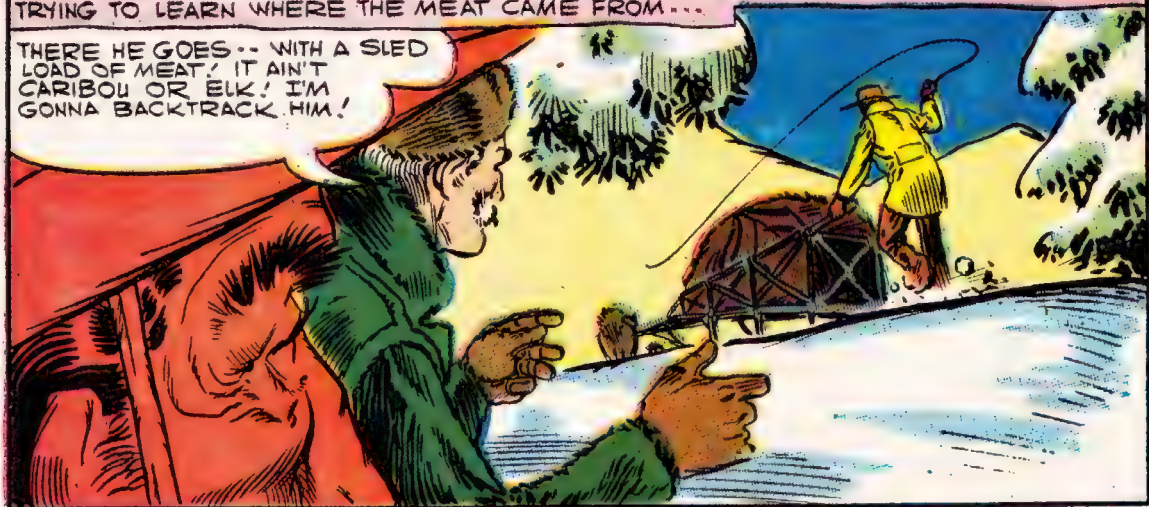
NOME, ALASKA, IN THE YEAR 1892 WAS BOOMING! THEY CAME HUNTING GOLD AND THEY FOUND IT... BUT THE SHIPS CARRIED MEN NORTH, NOT SUPPLIES, AND SOME OF THE WEALTHIEST MEN IN THE WORLD HAD HUNGER CRAMPS, BUT NOT DUTCH KESSLER.





DUTCH WAS MAKING MONEY HAND OVER FIST! THEN, A COMPETITOR BEGAN WATCHING HIM, TRYING TO LEARN WHERE THE MEAT CAME FROM...

THERE HE GOES -- WITH A SLED LOAD OF MEAT. IT AIN'T CARIBOU OR ELK. I'M GONNA BACKTRACK HIM!



THE TRAIL OF THE HEAVILY LOADED SLEIGH WAS EASY TO FOLLOW! IT LEAD AROUND A HILL TO A SOLID WALL OF ICE...AN ANCIENT GLACIER...

HE STOPPED JUST AHEAD! NOW WE'LL FIND OUT!

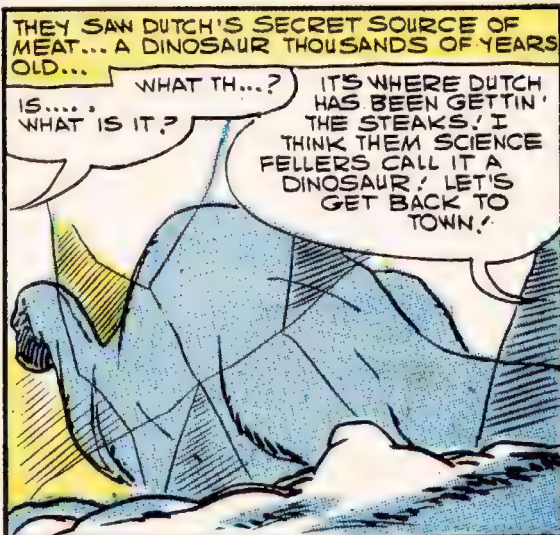


THEY SAW DUTCH'S SECRET SOURCE OF MEAT... A DINOSAUR THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD...

IS.... WHAT IS IT?

WHAT TH...?

IT'S WHERE DUTCH HAS BEEN GETTIN' THE STEAKS! I THINK THEM SCIENCE FELLERS CALL IT A DINOSAUR! LET'S GET BACK TO TOWN!



DON'T GO IN THERE! THAT MEAT HE'S SELLING IS THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD! IT'S FROM A MONSTER HE FOUND BURIED IN A GLACIER!

WHAT DO I CARE? I ATE TWO YESTERDAY AND THEY WERE DELICIOUS! GET OUTA MY WAY!



I JUST GOT BRAVE AN' TRIED ONE MYSELF! NOT BAD EITHER! ANY TIME YUH WANT ONE, JUST GET UP A HUNDRED DOLLARS!

I'M BEAT, DUTCH! THROW ONE ON THE FIRE -- I'LL BE RIGHT IN!



END





Mysteries of  
UNEEXPLORED WORLDS

Nº 4

MYSTERIES  
OF

# UNEEXPLORED WORLDS

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

10¢

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

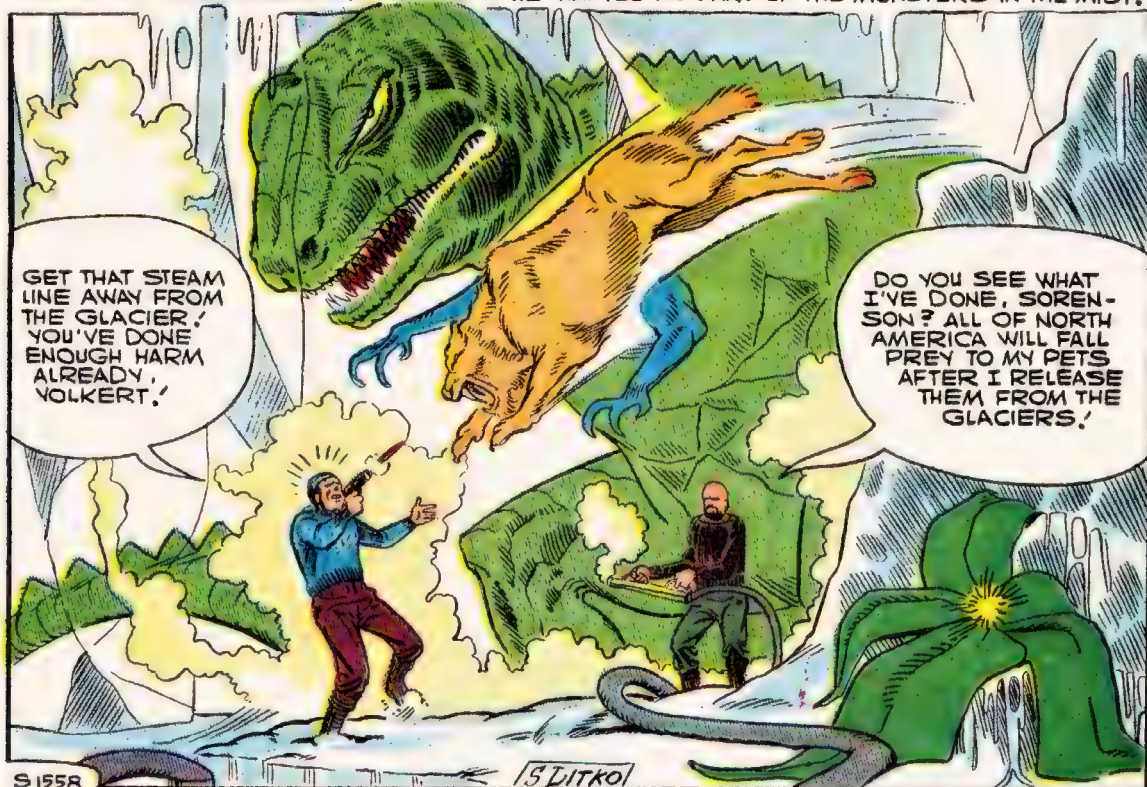
YOU are lucky!  
YOU can just read about it ...  
YOU don't have to enter the  
**"FORBIDDEN ROOM"**





# VALLEY IN THE MIST

EVEN THE EXISTING MAPS IGNORED THE DESOLATE WASTELAND FAR NORTH OF FAIRBANKS! SOCK SORENSON WISHED HE'D NEVER LAID EYES ON THE VALLEY WHERE NO MAN HAD TROD BEFORE, AFTER HE LEARNED ITS TERRIBLE SECRET. FLYING A CHARTER PLANE IN THE NORTH WAS DANGEROUS ENOUGH -- HE WANTED NO PART OF THE MONSTERS IN THE MIST!



SOCK SORENSON WASN'T GETTING RICH BEFORE DOCTOR ERNST VOLKERT CONTACTED HIM. BUT HE WAS SATISFIED. VOLKERT'S AMPLE FEE SHOULD HAVE WARNED HIM...

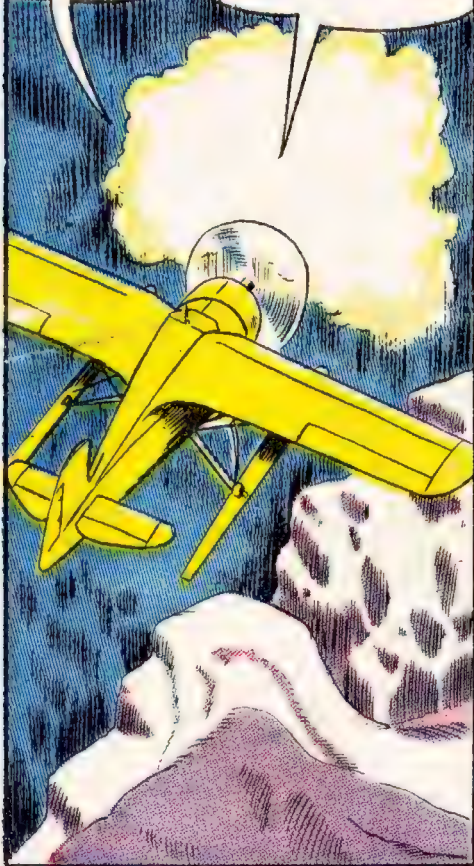




AN HOUR LATER, SOCK SORENSON AND HIS PASSENGER WERE ON THEIR WAY ...

THAT'S A FUNNY CLOUD -- IT LOOKS LIKE STEAM.'

IT IS.' OF VOLCANIC ORIGIN.' VLADIMIR WORKED OUT A PLAN TO DIVERT AN UNDERGROUND STREAM TO A VOLCANIC FISSURE.'



THAT WARM AIR FORMS A MURDEROUS UPDRAFT.' I'LL MARK IT ON THE NAVIGATION CHART TO WARN OTHERS.'

DON'T DO THAT.' THEN OTHERS MAY FIND IT.'

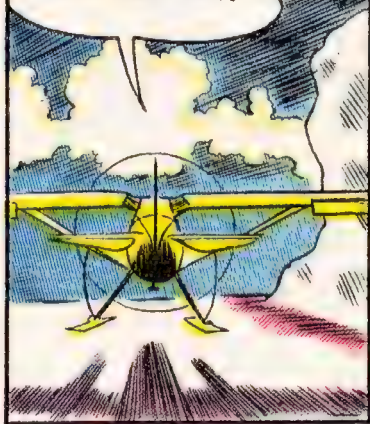


I WARN YOU, I'M NOT JOKING, SORENSON, I SHALL DESTROY THIS MAP.'

THAT WON'T HELP.' I'LL MARK IT ON ANOTHER ONE WHEN I GET BACK.'



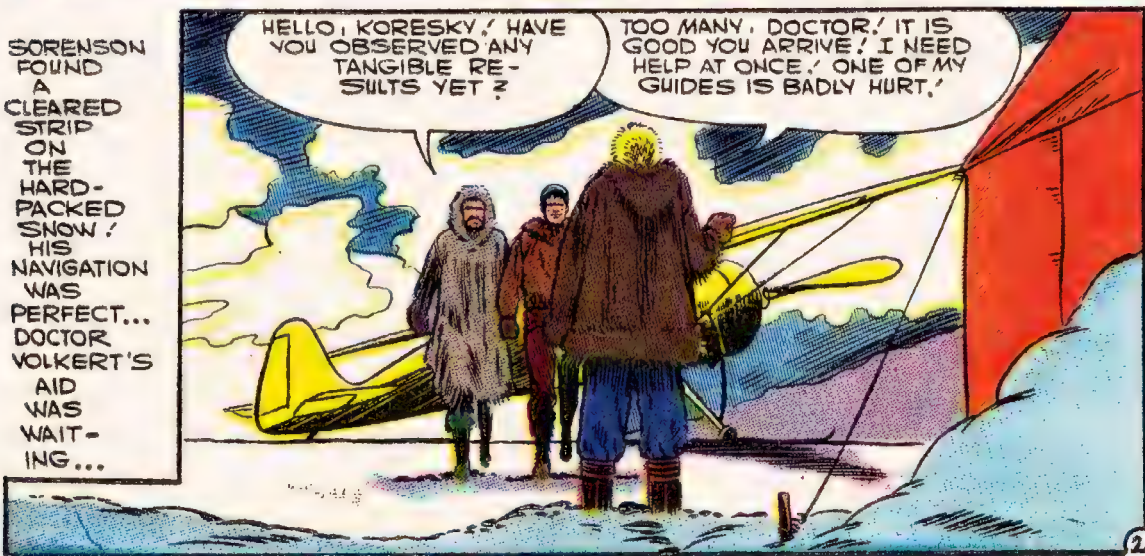
YOU MEAN *IF* YOU GET BACK.' LAND SAFELY -- IF YOU BREAK ANYTHING NONE OF US WILL GET OUT.'



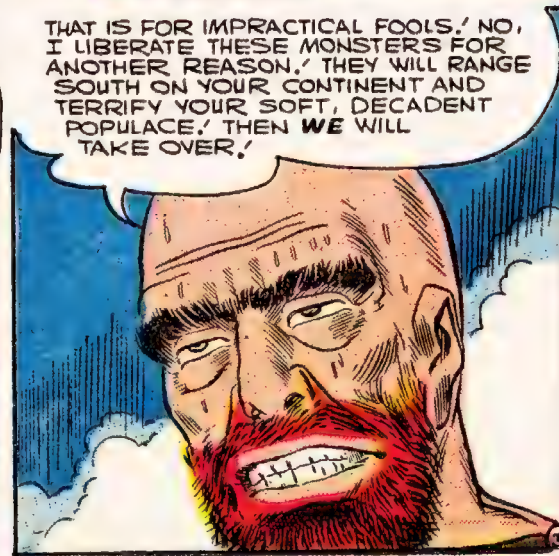
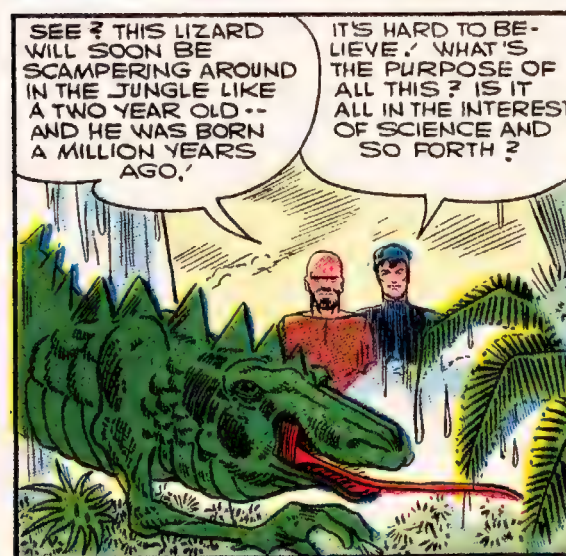
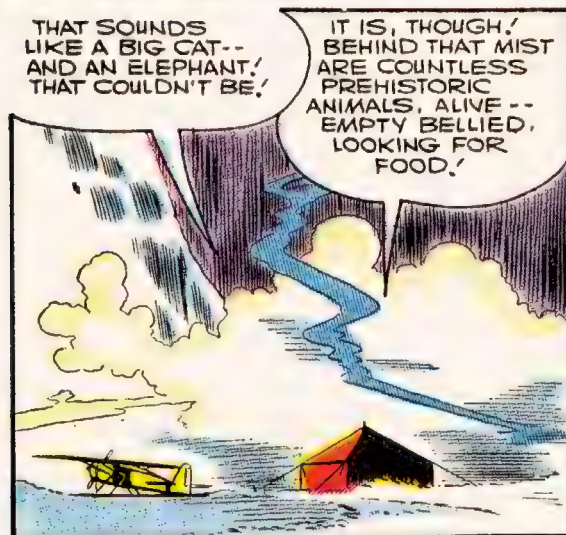
SORENSON FOUND A CLEARED STRIP ON THE HARD-PACKED SNOW. HIS NAVIGATION WAS PERFECT... DOCTOR VOLKERT'S AID WAS WAITING...

HELLO, KORESKY, HAVE YOU OBSERVED ANY TANGIBLE RESULTS YET ?

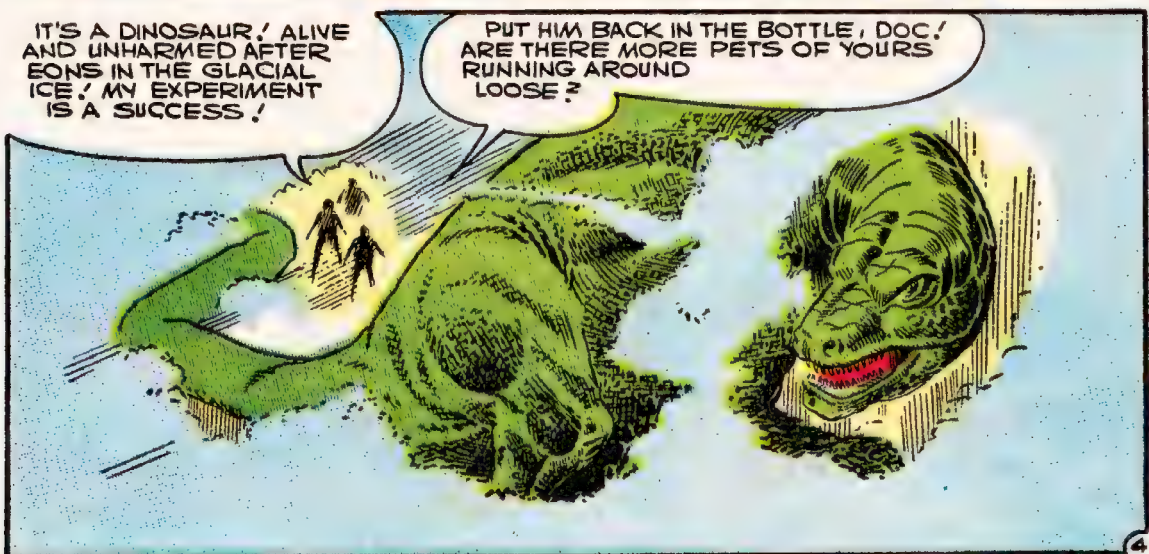
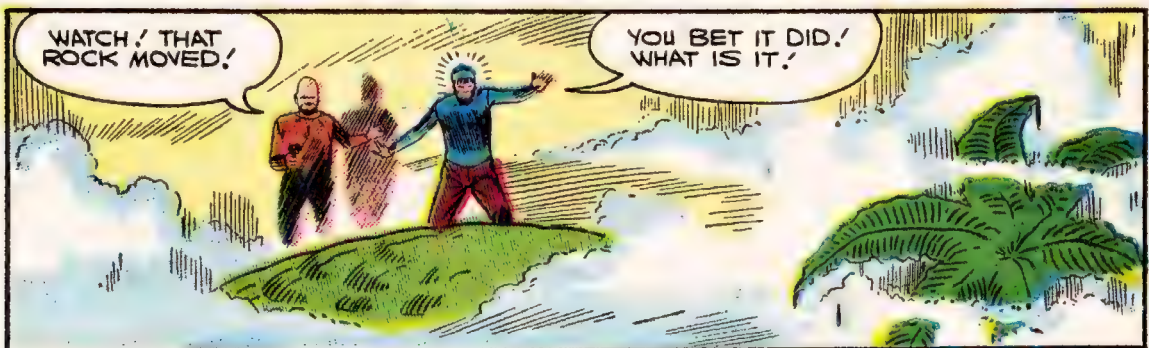
TOO MANY, DOCTOR, IT IS GOOD YOU ARRIVE, I NEED HELP AT ONCE, ONE OF MY GUIDES IS BADLY HURT.'









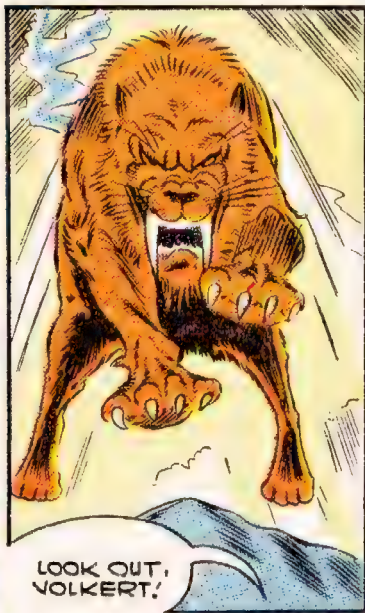




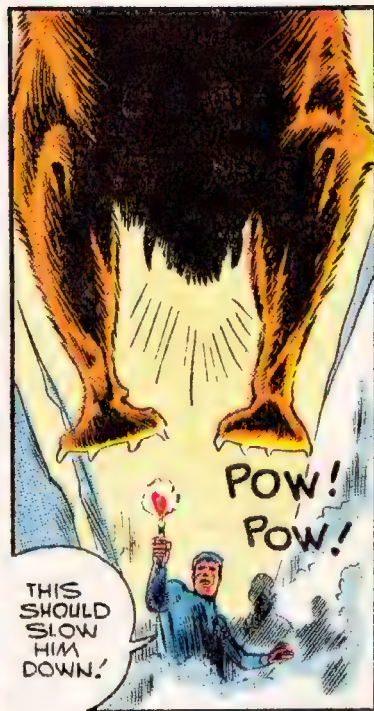
LOOK! EVEN THE WARM BLOODED ANIMALS SURVIVED! IT IS INCREDIBLE! BUT IT SUPPORTS MY THEORY! THE OTHERS LAUGHED BUT NOW I LAUGH!



VOLKERT HAD HIS LAUGH... BUT THE SABER TOOTHED TIGER WASN'T IN ON THE JOKE...



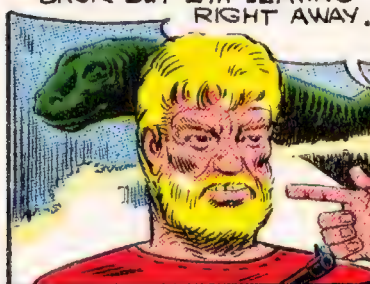
LOOK OUT, VOLKERT!



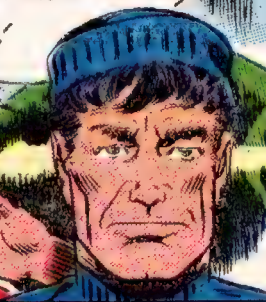
POW!  
POW!

THIS SHOULD SLOW HIM DOWN!

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! I FLEW YOU HERE AND I'LL GIVE YOU A RIDE BACK BUT I'M LEAVING RIGHT AWAY!



NO, YOU'RE NOT, SORENSON! KORESKY IS STILL BEHIND YOU WITH A GUN!



THE GLACIAL ICE ABOUNDED WITH PRE-HISTORIC LIFE FROZEN THERE IN PERFECT CONDITION! THE SEARING STEAM MELTED THE ICE FAST...

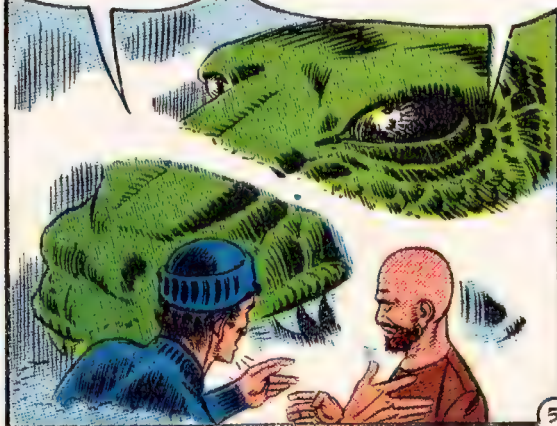
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CHanneled THAT STEAM UP HERE BUT YOU'D BETTER STOP IT! WITH THESE THINGS LOOSE, THEY'LL WRECK THE COUNTRY!



EXACTLY! AFTER THAT HAPPENS, I WILL STOP THE FLOW OF STEAM!

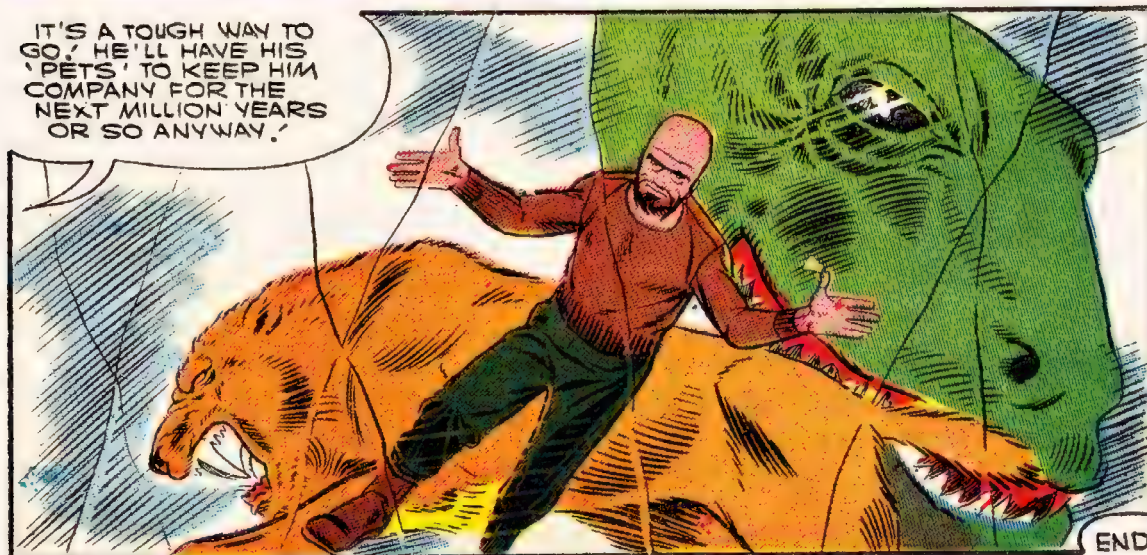
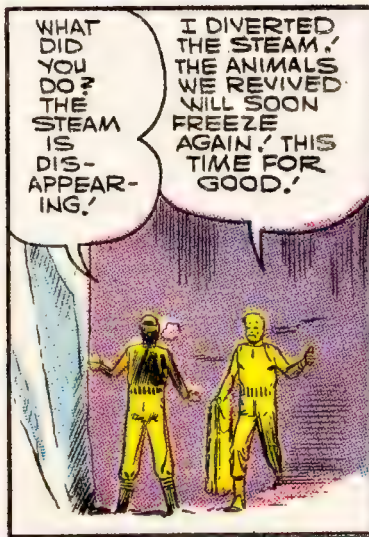
I'M GETTIN'... LOOK OUT! WE'LL ARGUE OUTSIDE!

NO! YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE THIS PLACE! YOU WILL LIVE ONLY AS LONG AS WE NEED YOU, SORENSON!





WHILE SORENSON FOLLOWED THE SCIENTIST, MORE AND MORE PREHISTORIC MONSTERS WERE COMING TO LIFE. THEY WERE ALL VORACIOUS -- IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THEIR LAST MEAL...



END





STRANGE  
SUSPENSE STORIES

No. 33

# STRANGE

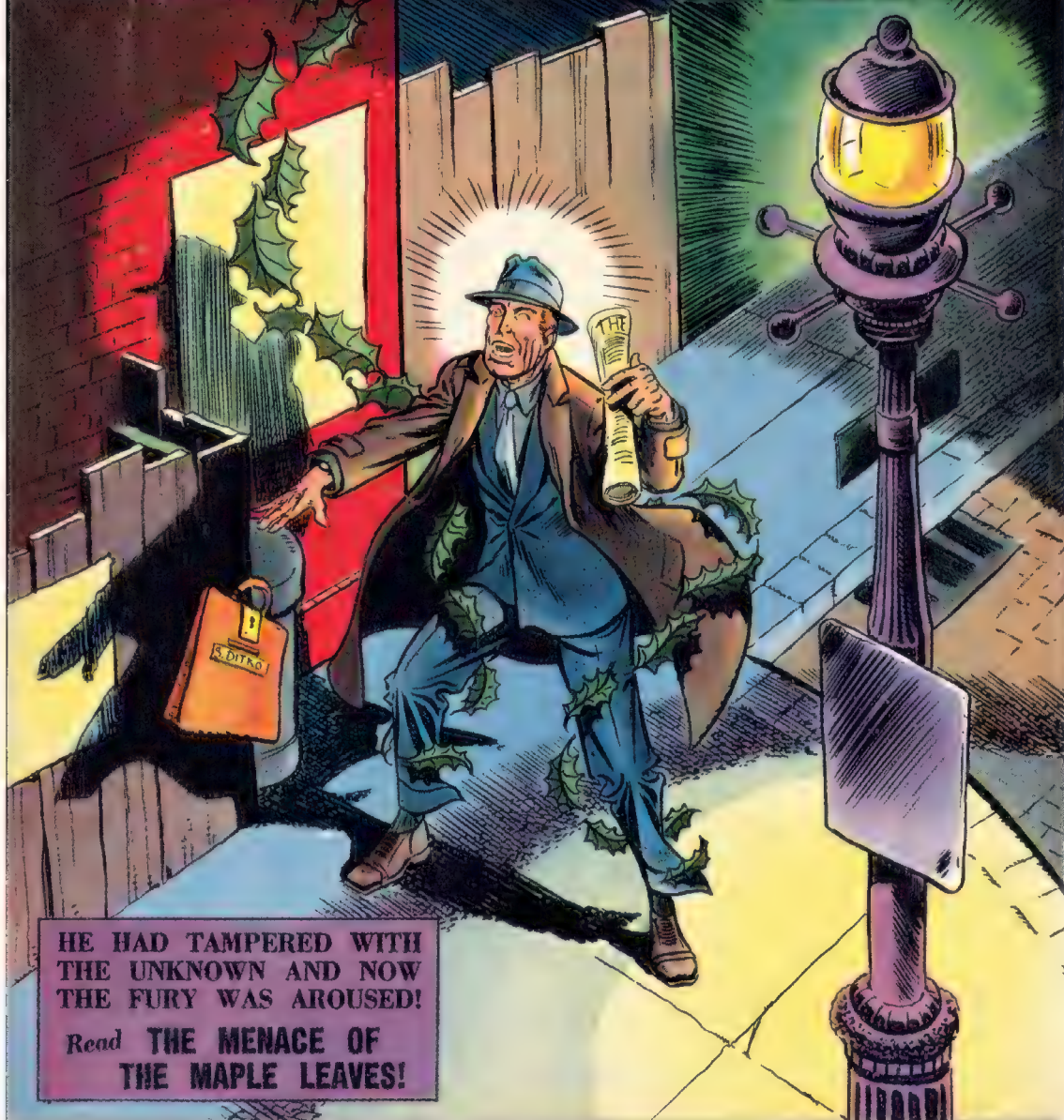
APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY



AUTHORITY

# SUSPENSE STORIES

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



HE HAD TAMPERED WITH  
THE UNKNOWN AND NOW  
THE FURY WAS AROUSED!

Read **THE MENACE OF  
THE MAPLE LEAVES!**



# DIRECTOR OF THE BOARD

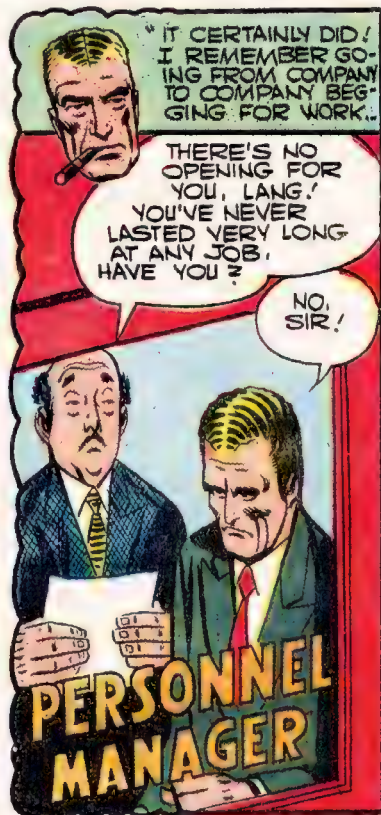
DIRECTOR OF THE BOARD... OF THE BIGGEST INDUSTRIES IN THE WORLD! A MAN DREAMED THAT ONCE AND THE DREAM CAME TRUE! THIS IS THE SUCCESS STORY OF HOLLISTER LANG, AND HOW HE LEARNED THE LAST CHAPTER OF A STRANGE DREAM HE BEGAN TEN YEARS BEFORE...

I'M SORRY I HAVE NO JOB OPEN FOR YOU, CARTER, BUT I'D ADVISE YOU TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF! I WAS LIKE YOU ONCE... BEFORE THE DREAM! BUT I DREAMED AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM AND IT ALMOST CAME TRUE!



WHAT WAS IT, SIR? YOU MEAN IT HELPED YOU GET TO WHERE YOU ARE?

H. LANG



"IT CERTAINLY DID! I REMEMBER GOING FROM COMPANY TO COMPANY BEGGING FOR WORK..."

THERE'S NO OPENING FOR YOU, LANG! YOU'VE NEVER LASTED VERY LONG AT ANY JOB, HAVE YOU?

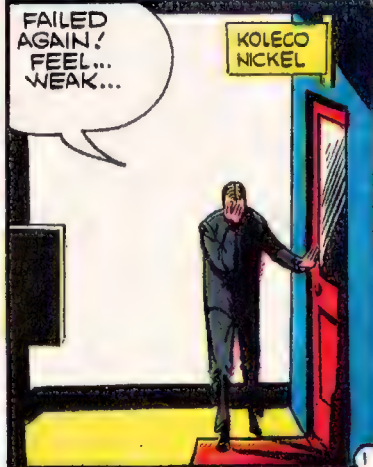
NO, SIR!

PERSONNEL MANAGER

I HADN'T EATEN IN DAYS! I WAS GETTING LIGHTEADED FROM HUNGER...

FAILED AGAIN! FEEL... WEAK...

KOLECO NICKEL





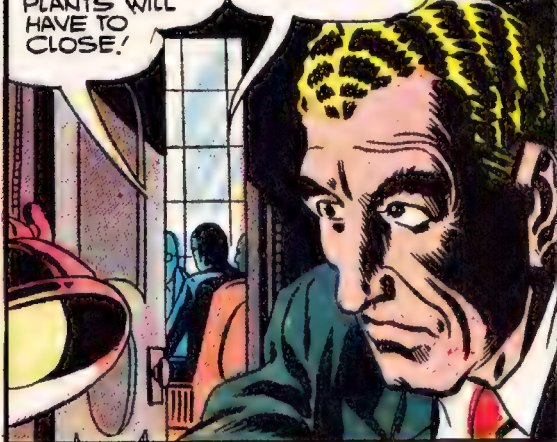
THEN I WAS INSIDE THE KOLECO OFFICES... TALKING TO THE PERSONNEL DIRECTOR! HE'S THE MAN YOU MET EARLIER THIS MORNING...

DON'T HAND ME THAT "SORRY, WE'VE GOT NO OPENINGS" ROUTINE! A FIRM AS BIG AS THIS ONE ALWAYS NEEDS GOOD EXECUTIVES! WHERE'S THE BOSS? I'LL TALK TO HIM!



IF WE DON'T FIND THIS METAL IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITY, OUR PLANTS WILL HAVE TO CLOSE!

BUT THE NEW MACHINE! YOU SAID THE NEW MACHINE WOULD FIND IT FOR US!



THE ENGINEER WHO RUNS IT REFUSES TO GO BELOW TWENTY THOUSAND FEET! NO ONE ELSE WILL EITHER!

WAIT! I'M AN ENGINEER! LET ME TRY!



SILLY, ISN'T IT? I DREAMED THAT THE DIRECTOR SNAPPED AT MY OFFER...

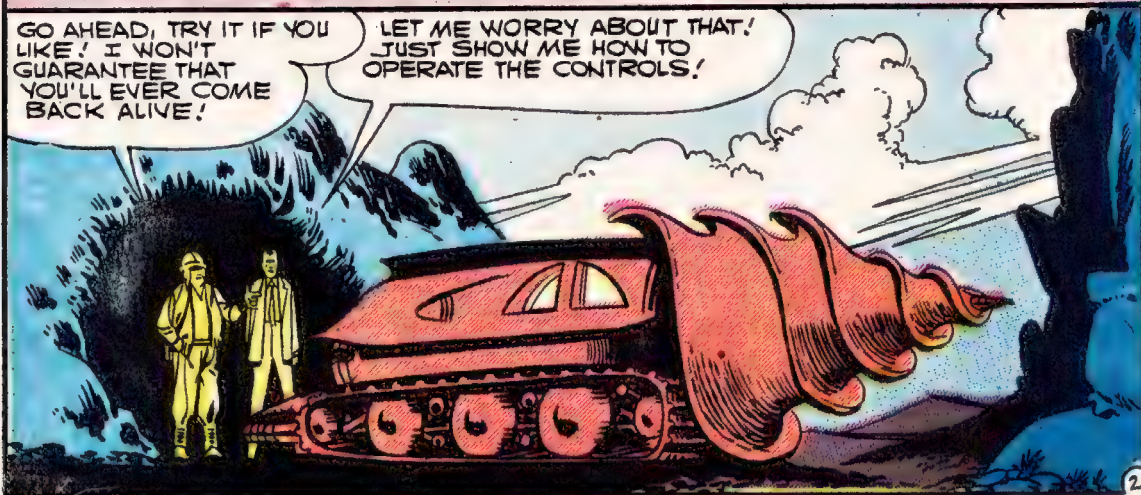
YOU'RE HIRED! I'LL HAVE TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED AT ONCE!



EVERYTHING WORKED BEAUTIFULLY! I WAS AS FRIGHTENED AS THE ENGINEER BUT I VOWED NOT TO TURN BACK TO THE SURFACE WITHOUT FINDING ORE...

GO AHEAD, TRY IT IF YOU LIKE! I WON'T GUARANTEE THAT YOU'LL EVER COME BACK ALIVE!

LET ME WORRY ABOUT THAT! JUST SHOW ME HOW TO OPERATE THE CONTROLS!

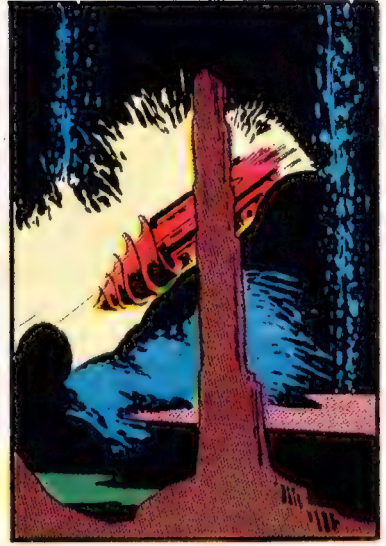




I PRACTICED A FEW TIMES,  
THEN I POINTED THE NOSE  
STRAIGHT DOWN AND GAVE  
IT FULL THROTTLE ...



I'M DEEPER THAN THE  
ENGINEER EVER WENT  
ALREADY! IF I DON'T  
FIND ORE SOON,  
I'VE FAILED!



THE METAL WAS THERE ... THOUSANDS OF TONS OF HIGH GRADE NICKEL ALLOY! I KNEW IT  
WAS MY BIG BREAK...

I FOUND IT! THERE'S NO  
STOPPING ME NOW! I'LL  
GO TO THE TOP!



I DID TOO! AT FIRST I WAS  
MINING ENGINEER, THEN I  
WAS IN CHARGE OF ALL OUR  
MINING OPERATIONS! I  
WAS PRETTY TOUGH IN THAT  
DREAM OF MINE...

WHAT DO YOU  
MEAN YOU'RE  
NOT GOING  
BACK IN THE  
DEEP SHAFT?  
IT'S SAFE  
I TELL  
YOU!

NOT SAFE!  
WE GO  
BACK!  
WE DIE!  
COME ON,  
YOU FELLERS  
WE QUIT!



YOU'RE NOT STARTING  
ANY LABOR TROUBLE  
FOR US!



I FACED THE MEN DOWN, LED  
THEM INTO THE SHAFT! THE  
MINE **WAS** DANGEROUS --  
BUT I COULDN'T STOP PRO-  
DUCTION FOR A THING LIKE  
THAT...

GET TO WORK,  
MEN! REMEMBER, YOU  
GET A BONUS BASED ON  
TONNAGE! FORGET THAT  
NONSENSE ABOUT  
MINE CAVES!





THE MINE DID CAVE IN LATER--BUT MINING IS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS AND SOME ALWAYS DIE! THE IMPORTANT THING IS, I GOT PRODUCTION...

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, LANG! THE COMPANY IS DOUBLING YOUR PAY-- YOU'RE TO SAIL FOR SOUTH AMERICA, CHECK ON THE IRON-NICKEL ORE THERE!



YES, THAT WAS QUITE A DREAM I HAD! OF COURSE, MY OWN RISE IN THE COMPANY CAME IN THE LEGAL END OF THE FIRM-- BUT IN THAT DREAM, I WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT TYPE...

WE STOP HERE! HEAD SHRINKERS TRIBE DO NOT LIKE FOREIGNERS!

WE'RE NOT STOPPING! WE'RE GOING AHEAD!



SURRENDER OR DIE, CHIEF!



THE COMPANY GOT MINING RIGHTS WHERE OUR COMPETITORS HAD FAILED! I WASN'T TOO PARTICULAR WHOSE NECK I STEPPED ON EITHER...

WAIT, LANG! I SIGNED THAT DEED WAIVER WHILE I WAS DRINKING! IF YOU USE IT, YOU'LL RUIN ME!

THAT WON'T BOTHER ME! HERE-- BUY YOURSELF SOME MORE POISON!



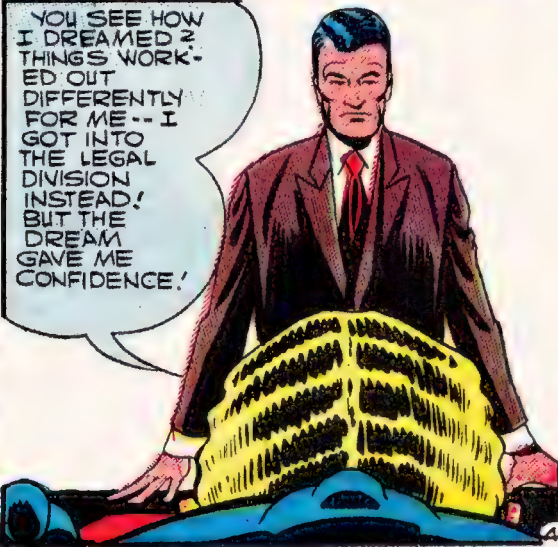
I GOT A BLOCK OF STOCK FOR THAT DEAL! I WAS ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS A SHORT TIME AFTERWARD...

WHAT DO YOU THINK, MR. LANG? SHOULD WE BUY THIS MAN'S SMELTING PROCESS?

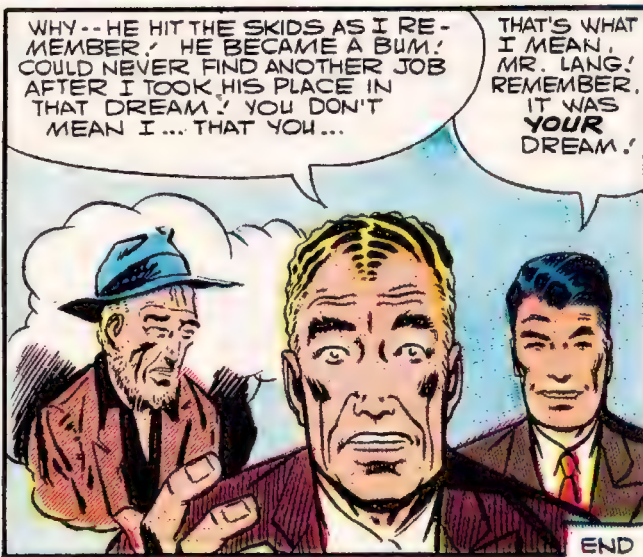
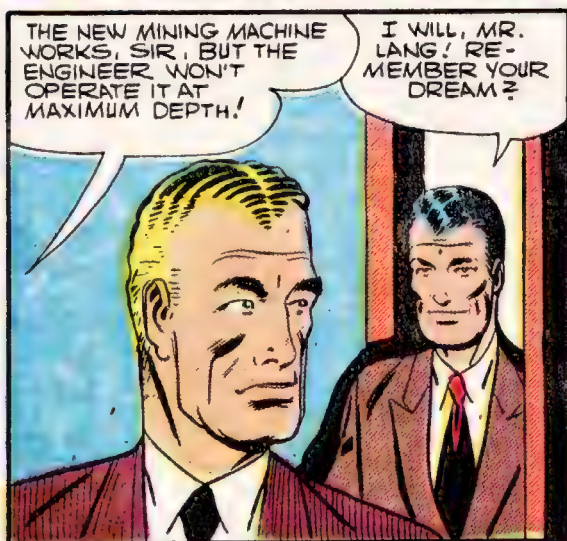
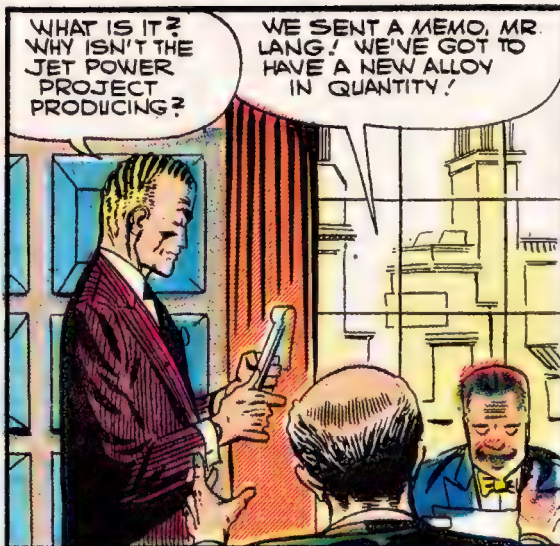
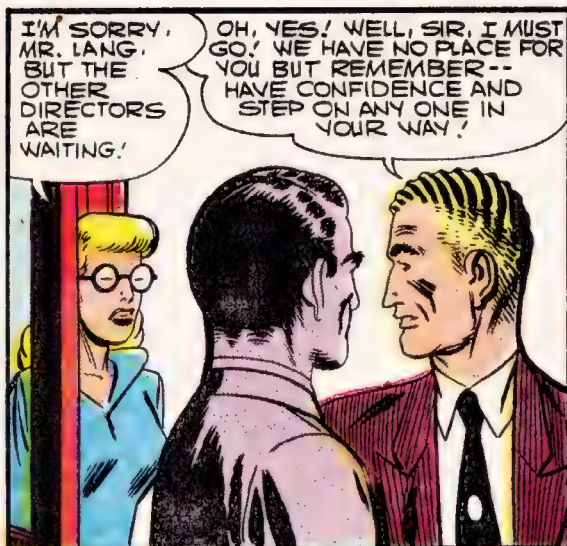
WHY BUY IT? TAKE IT! THE FOOL HASN'T PATENTED IT YET!



YOU SEE HOW I DREAMED? THINGS WORKED OUT DIFFERENTLY FOR ME-- I GOT INTO THE LEGAL DIVISION INSTEAD! BUT THE DREAM GAVE ME CONFIDENCE!









# THEY DIDN'T Believe Him

THEY CAMPED NEAR A LAKE THAT WARM SUMMER, AND THEY WERE GRATEFUL FOR THE COOLNESS THE LAKE'S BREEZE CARRIED TO THEIR BARE CHESTS! BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE THAT CAME UP FROM THE LAKE --AND THEY DISTRUSTED AND FEARED!

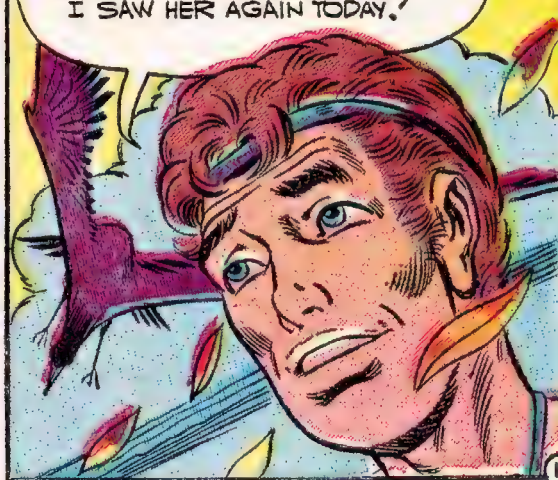


HE WAS TOO FILLED WITH EXCITEMENT AND WONDER AND LOVE TO NOTE HOW THEIR FACES WERE HARDENING ...

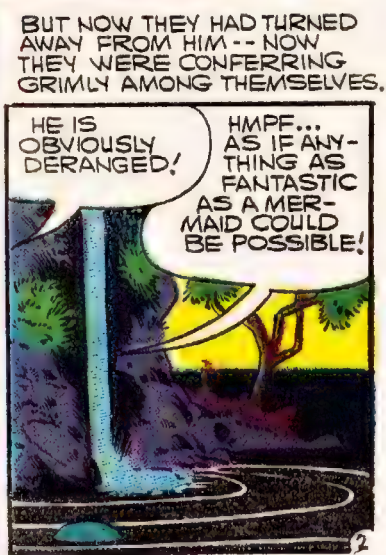
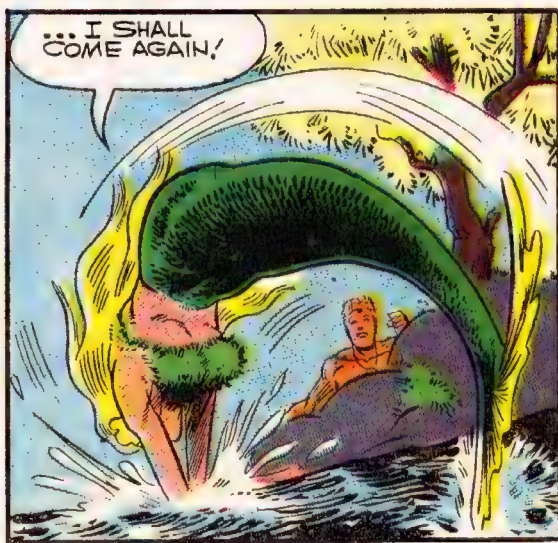
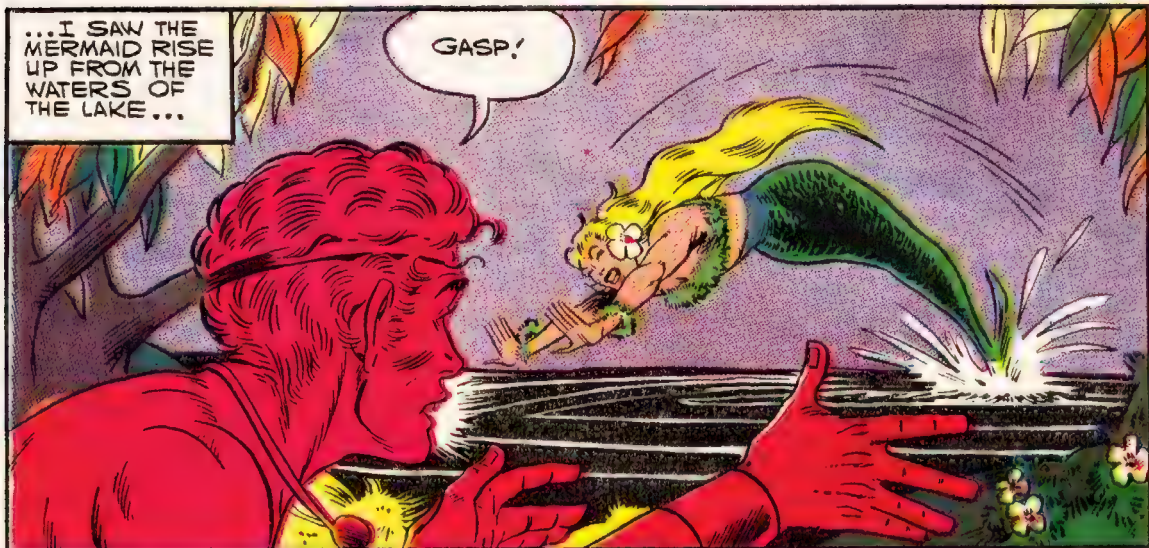
YOU SAID I WAS WRONG THE FIRST TIME! THAT I MUST HAVE BEEN DREAMING ...



... THAT SUCH THINGS DO NOT EXIST! THAT I HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A DREAM! BUT I SAW HER AGAIN TODAY!









THEY WERE THE ELDERS! THEY FELT THEIR LONG YEARS ENTITLED THEM TO DENY WHATEVER THEY HAD NEVER SEEN WITH THEIR OWN EYES...

HE MUST NOT BE PERMITTED TO WANDER ABOUT UNTIL HE REGAINS HIS SENSES!

HIS MADNESS MIGHT SPREAD!

FOR THE COMMON GOOD, HE MUST BE PUT AWAY!

ONCE THEY HAD DECIDED, THEY MOVED SWIFTLY...

NO! PLEASE... NO!

AND NOW HE WAS INSIDE A 'SHADOWY CAVE', IMPRISONED BY THE BOULDER THAT BLOCKED THE ENTRANCE...

SHE'LL COME BACK TO THE REEDS AND I (SOB) WON'T BE THERE!

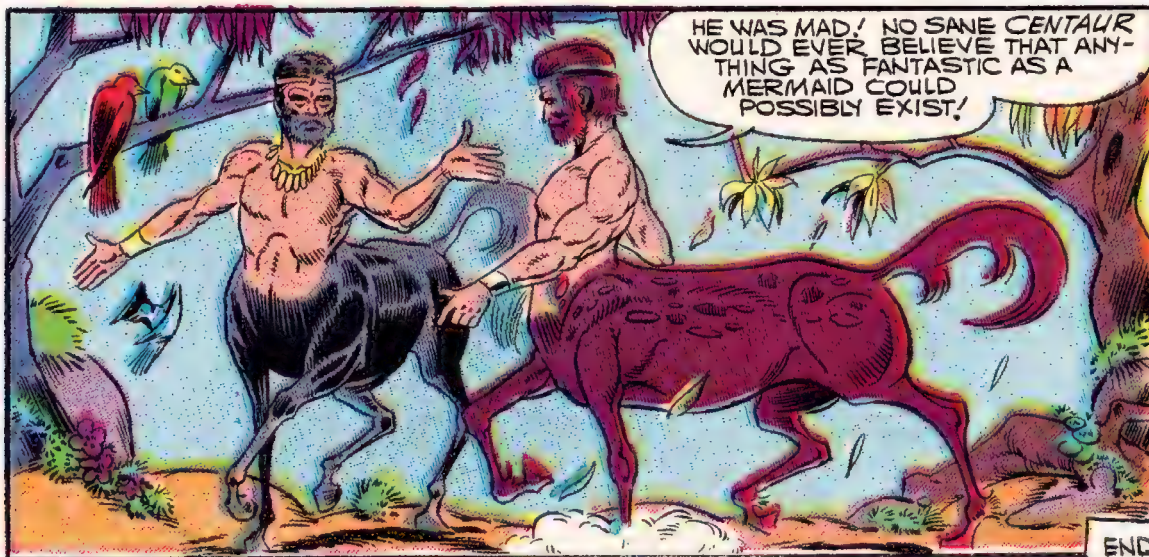
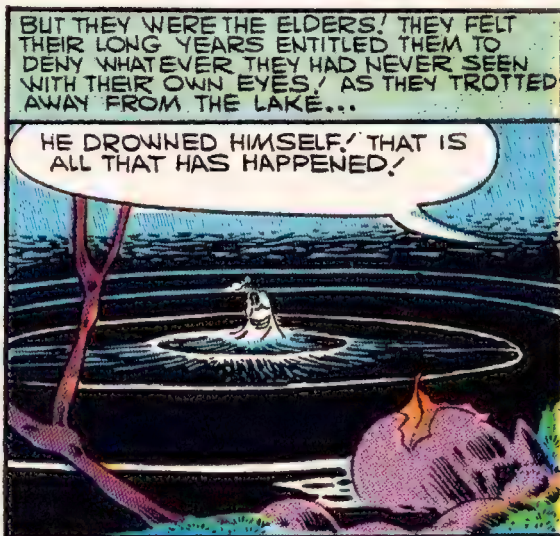
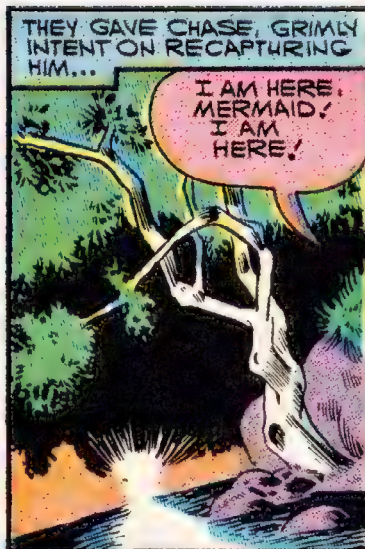
HE WAS YOUNG AND STRONG, AND DESPERATION INCREASED HIS STRENGTH MANYFOLD! HE KEPT HEAVING AGAINST THE BOULDER THAT WAS HIS JAILER...

THE REEDS! HAVE TO GET DOWN TO THE REEDS!

AT LAST, JUST WHEN THE BLACKNESS OF NIGHT WAS BEGINNING TO BE DIMLY GREYED BY DAWN...

I'M FREE!





END



# FOREVER *and* EVER

I'M TELLING YOU--WHEN A GUY'S BEEN ON THE ROAD FOR MORE YEARS THAN A MONGREL HAS FLEAS, HE HEARS HARD LUCK STORIES SCARY ENOUGH TO TURN HIS HAIR WHITE, *IF* HE ONLY BELIEVED THEM! AND THIS, THE SCARIEST ONE OF ALL, I HAD TO BELIEVE.



S1563

I WAS GLAD WHEN HE SHOWED UP THAT NIGHT! I DIDN'T KNOW HIM FROM A HOLE IN THE WALL-- BUT WE COULD SWAP STORIES... AND MAYBE THAT WAY FORGET HOW COLD AND HUNGRY WE WERE! I TOLD MINE FIRST...

YUP-- THAT'S HOW I GOT TO BE A BUM! I'VE HAD A ROTTEN DEAL IN LIFE-- THAT'S FOR SURE!



THEN HE STARTED-- TALKING SLOWLY, USING WORDS LIKE A CHARACTER OUT OF ONE OF THOSE OLD-FASHIONED BOOKS THEY TRIED TO MAKE ME READ WHEN I WAS A KID IN SCHOOL...

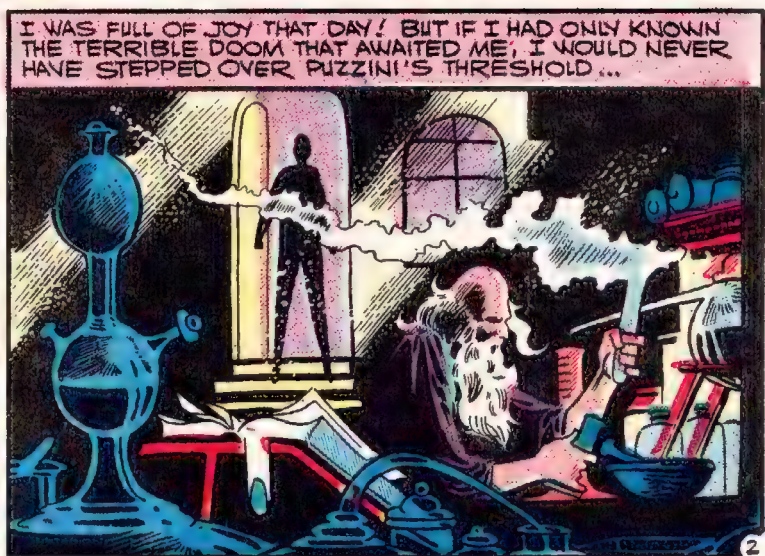
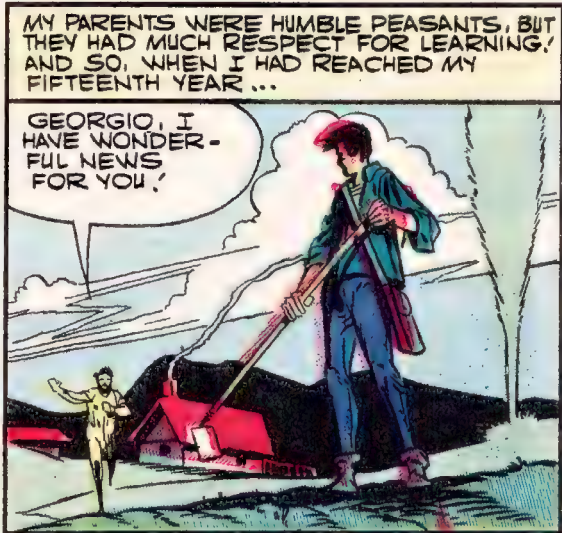
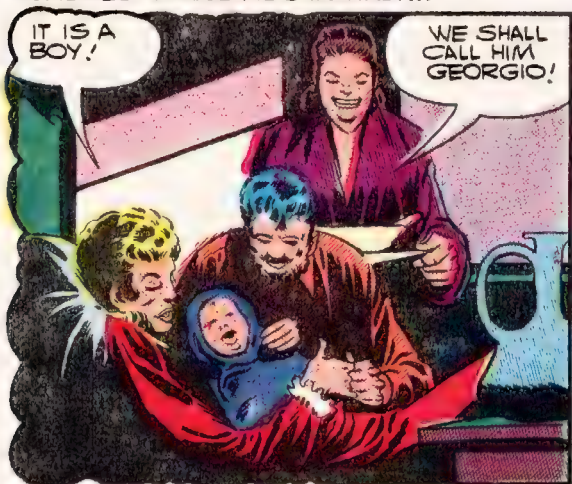
I AM **FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OLD** THIS NIGHT!







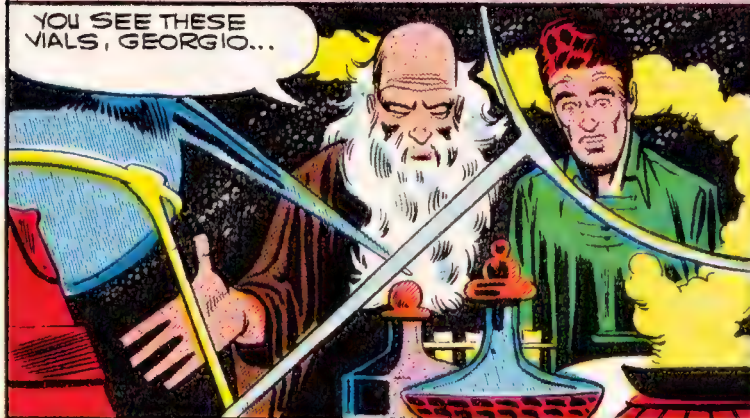
... BUT IT IS THE TRUTH! I WAS BORN FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO IN ITALY...



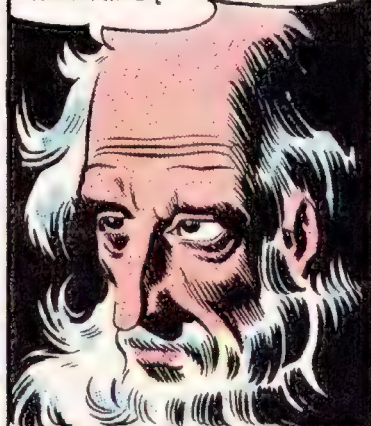


THIS PUZZINI WAS A STRANGE MAN, EVEN FOR AN ALCHEMIST! UNLIKE THE OTHERS IN HIS AWESOME TRADE, HE DID NOT SEEK THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE THAT WOULD CHANGE BASE METAL TO GOLD! HE SOUGHT SOMETHING A THOUSANDFOLD MORE VALUABLE...

YOU SEE THESE VIALS, GEORGIO...

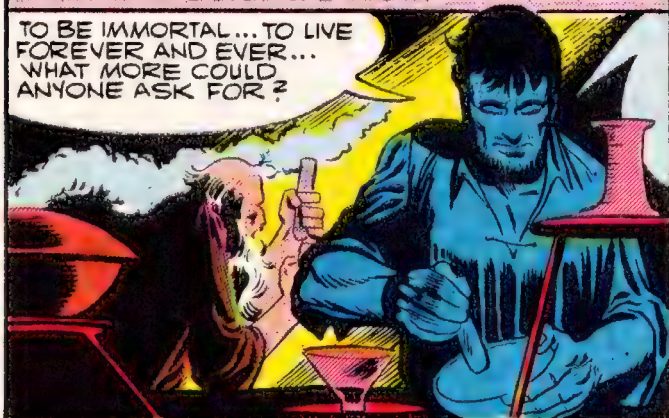


SOME DAY ALL OF THEM SHALL CONTAIN A SERUM CAPABLE OF GRANTING IMMORTALITY TO MANKIND!



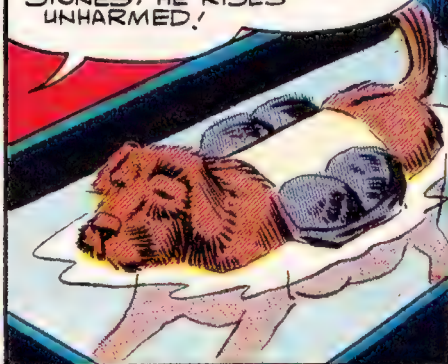
HE WORKED WITH THE INTENSITY OF A MADMAN-- DAY AND NIGHT, STOPPING ONLY FOR SNATCHES OF SLEEP AND SCANTY MEALS! BUT IT WAS A GLORIOUS MADNESS--AND AS I SLAVED AT HIS SIDE, IT INFECTED ME TOO...

TO BE IMMORTAL... TO LIVE FOREVER AND EVER... WHAT MORE COULD ANYONE ASK FOR?



AND THEN ONE DAY...

GEORGIO-- BEHOLD-- I HAVE FLUNG THE SERUM TREATED DOG INTO THE WATER! AND EVEN THOUGH HE IS WEIGHTED DOWN WITH HEAVY STONES, HE RISES UNHARMED!

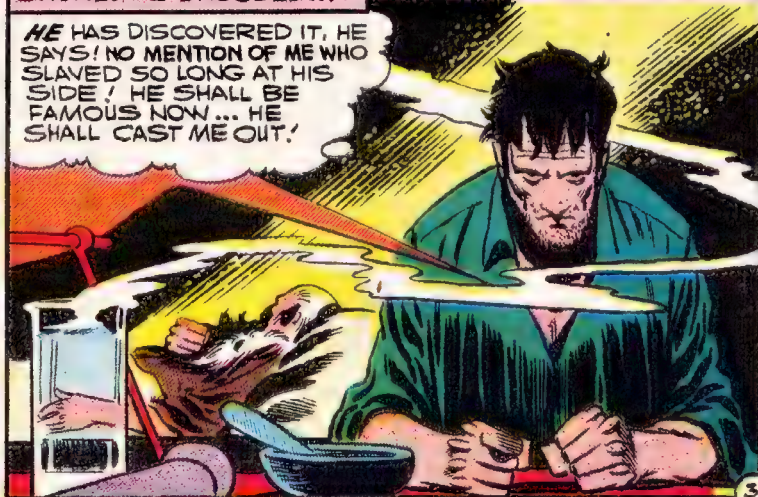


THE SERUM WORKS, GEORGIO! I HAVE DISCOVERED THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY!

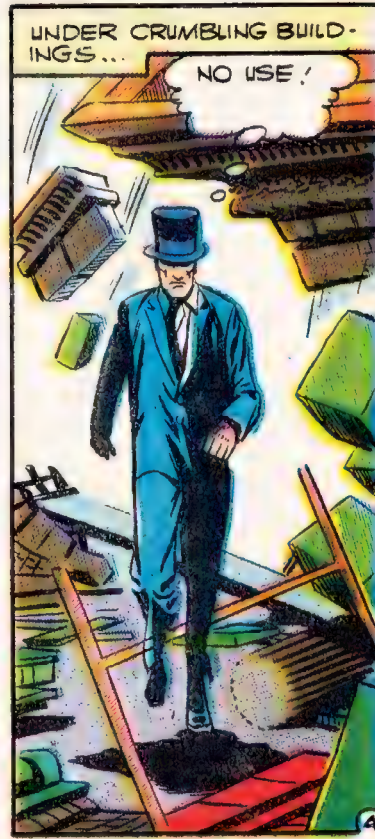


HE SLEPT THEN, EXHAUSTED BY HIS TRIUMPH! AND AS HE SNORED, I BROODED...

HE HAS DISCOVERED IT, HE SAYS! NO MENTION OF ME WHO SLAVED SO LONG AT HIS SIDE! HE SHALL BE FAMOUS NOW... HE SHALL CAST ME OUT!

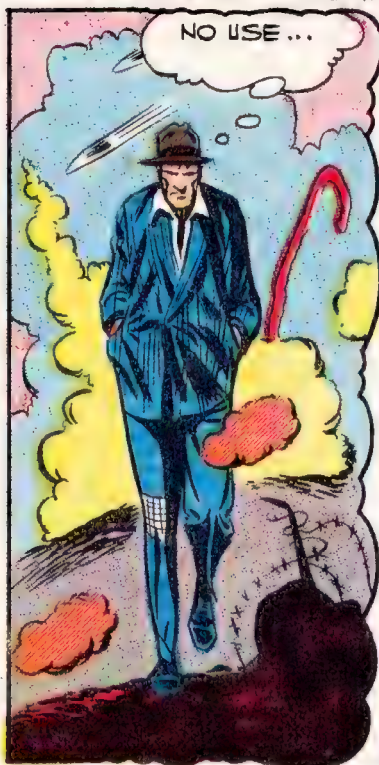




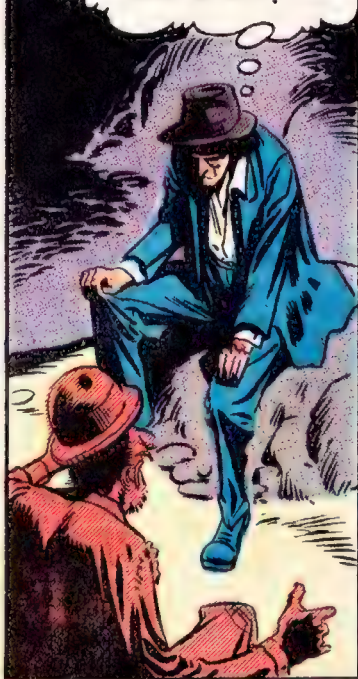




... DIRECTLY IN THE DEADLY  
PATH OF MODERN ARTILLERY...



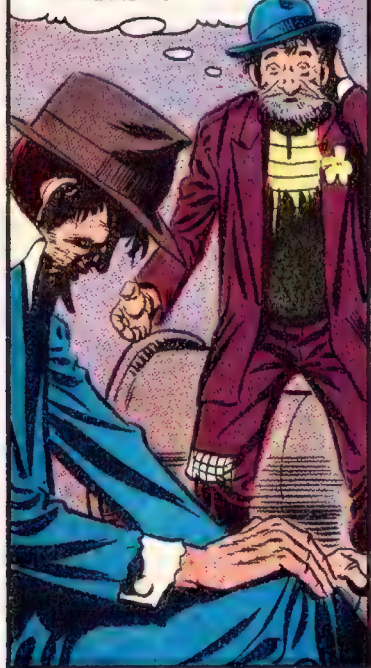
... IT WAS NEVER ANY USE!  
I COULD NOT DIE! I  
DRANK THE SERUM!  
MY DOOM IS (sob)  
TO LIVE FOREVER  
AND EVER!



UGH -- THIS GUY GIVES  
ME THE CREEPS! FOR  
A SECOND, WHILE HE  
WAS STILL TALKING, I  
WAS ALMOST BELIEVING  
HIM! LUCKY I'VE  
COME TO MY SENSES..



I BETTER TRY TO  
STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT!  
IF HE TELLS THAT STORY  
OF HIS TO A WRONGO,  
HE'LL WIND UP IN  
A STRAIGHT  
JACKET!



HEY, BUB-- IF EVERYTHING  
WORKED OUT THE WAY  
YOU SAID, HOW COME  
THAT ALCHEMIST NEVER  
MADE ANY MORE OF  
THE SERUM? AND  
HOW COME YOU'RE  
NOTHING BUT  
A HOBO?

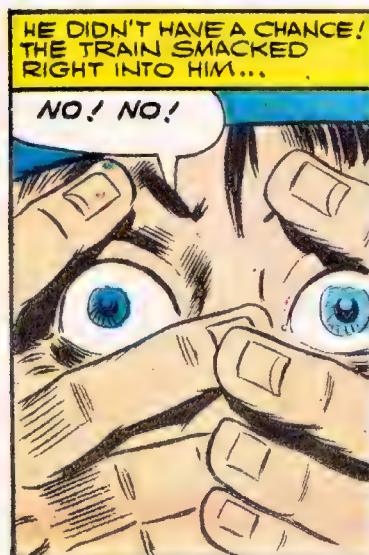
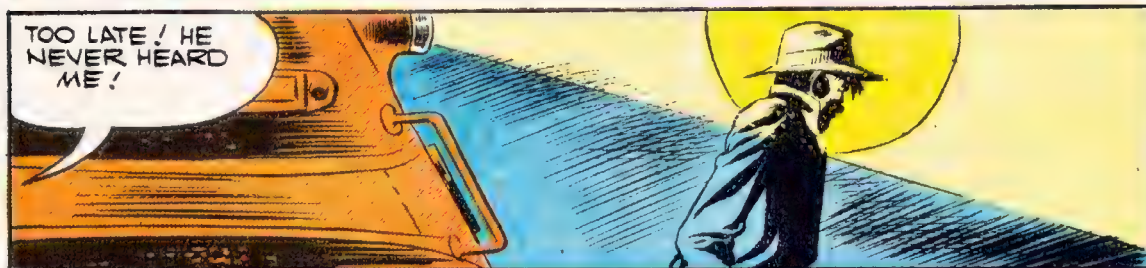
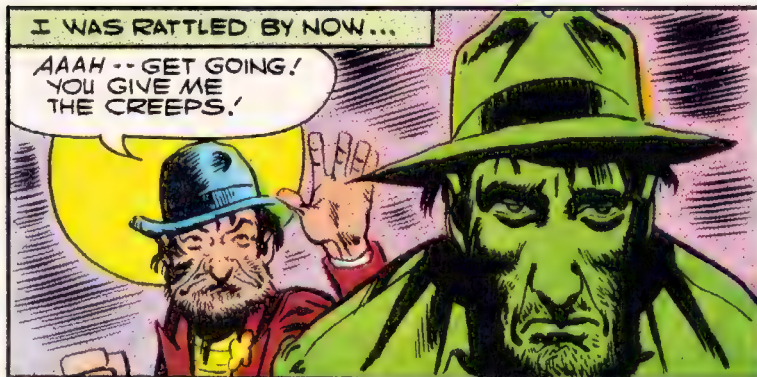


HOW COME?

BECAUSE THE SERUM WAS  
IMPERFECT! YES, IT  
GRANTED IMMORTALITY...  
BUT IT ALSO KILLED THE  
IMPULSE TO BETTER  
ONESELF! IT SHRANK  
A MAN'S SPIRIT -- SO  
ALL HE COULD DO WAS  
WANDER ABOUT AIM-  
LESSLY... HOPING  
TO DIE!









**M**Y NAME IS JONATHAN PRENTICE! I AM A BILLIONAIRE-- PRENTICE CHEMICALS ARE SOLD EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD! I CONTRIBUTE HEAVILY TO ALL WORTHWHILE CHARITIES, I AM THE SOLE SUPPORT OF THIS WORLD'S LARGEST RESEARCH FOUNDATION, I AM WIDELY RESPECTED, AN HONORED CITIZEN, A PILLAR OF SOCIETY, BUT EVERYTHING IS ABOUT TO CRUMBLE, BECAUSE THIS MAN KNOWS...

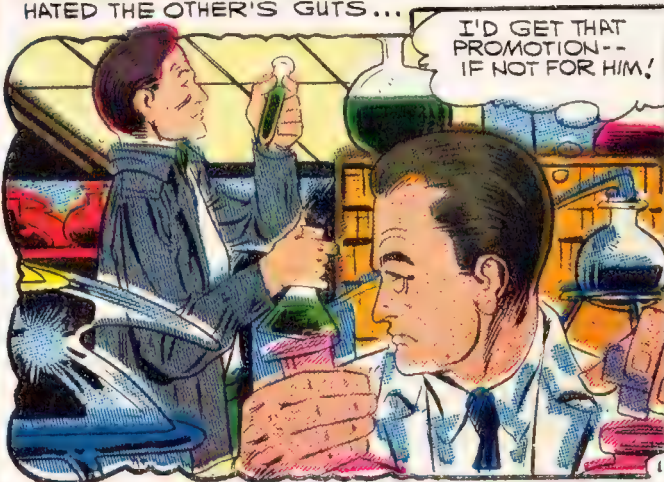
# My Secret



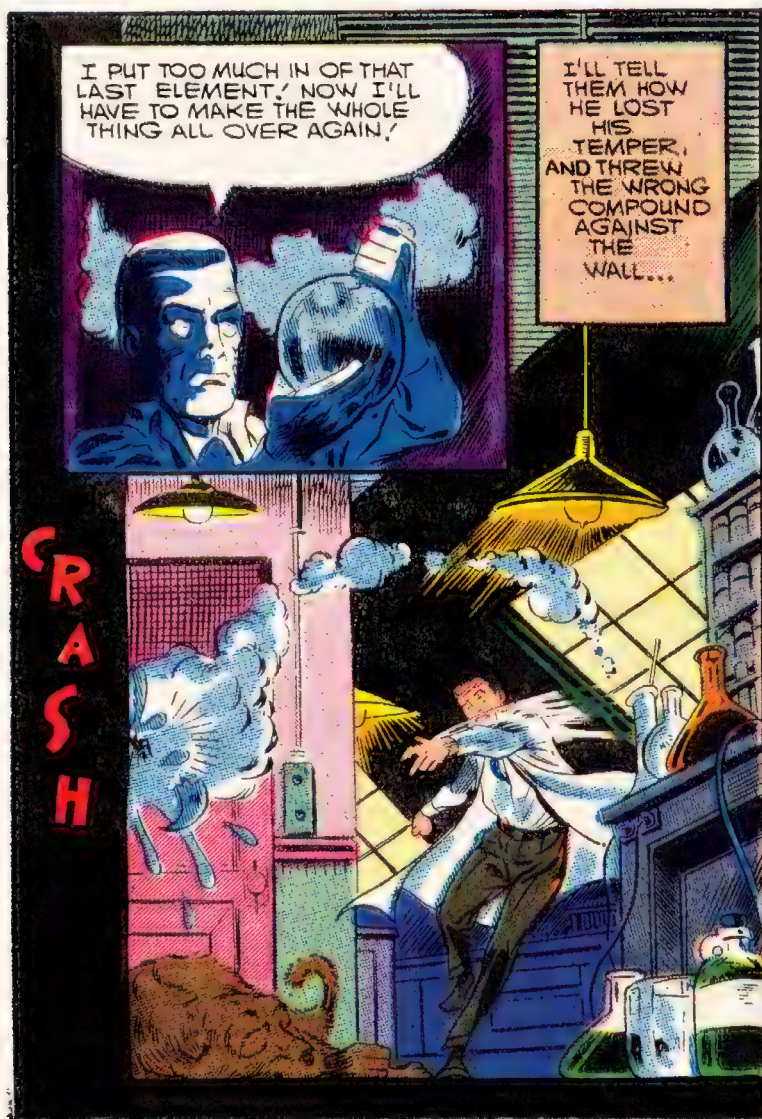
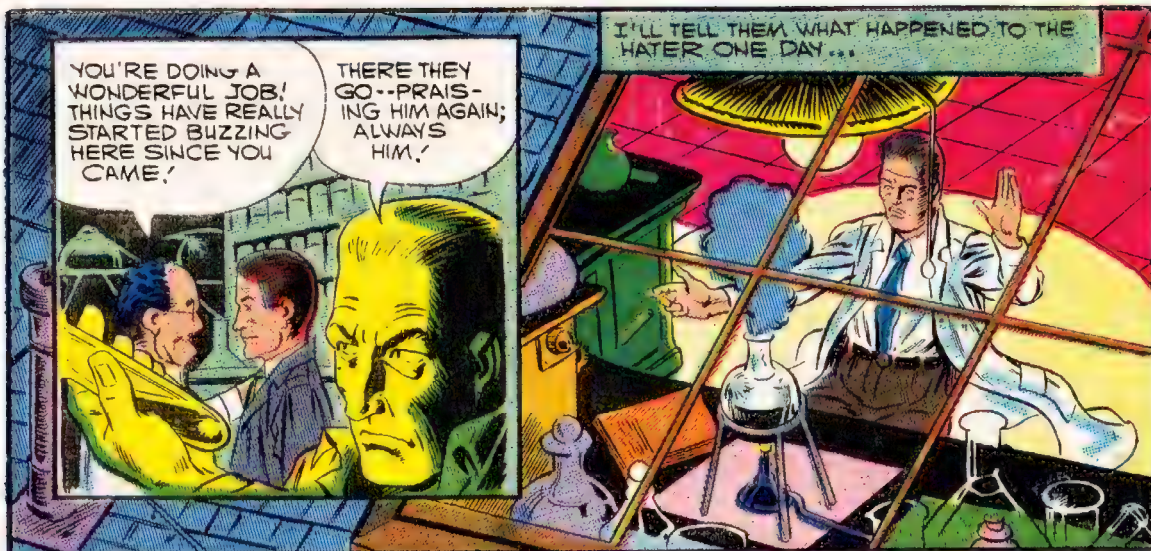
AND IF YOU DON'T, I'LL MAKE A PHONE CALL TO THE BIGGEST NEWSPAPER IN TOWN! I'LL TELL THEM ...



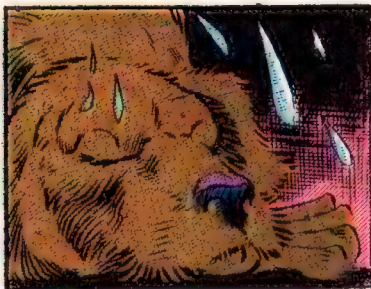
... "ALL ABOUT TWO YOUNG CHEMISTS WHO WORKED IN THE SAME LAB OVER FORTY- SIX YEARS AGO! I'LL TELL THEM HOW ONE OF THOSE CHEMISTS HATED THE OTHER'S GUTS ...



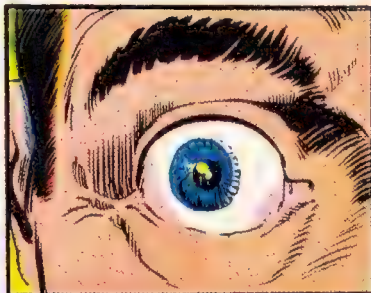




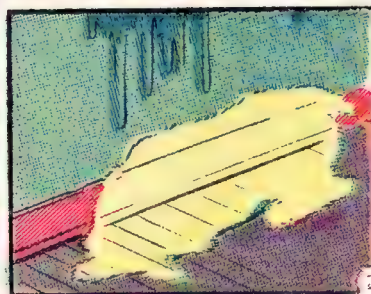
...HOW A FEW DROPS FELL ON A DOG SLEEPING THERE ...



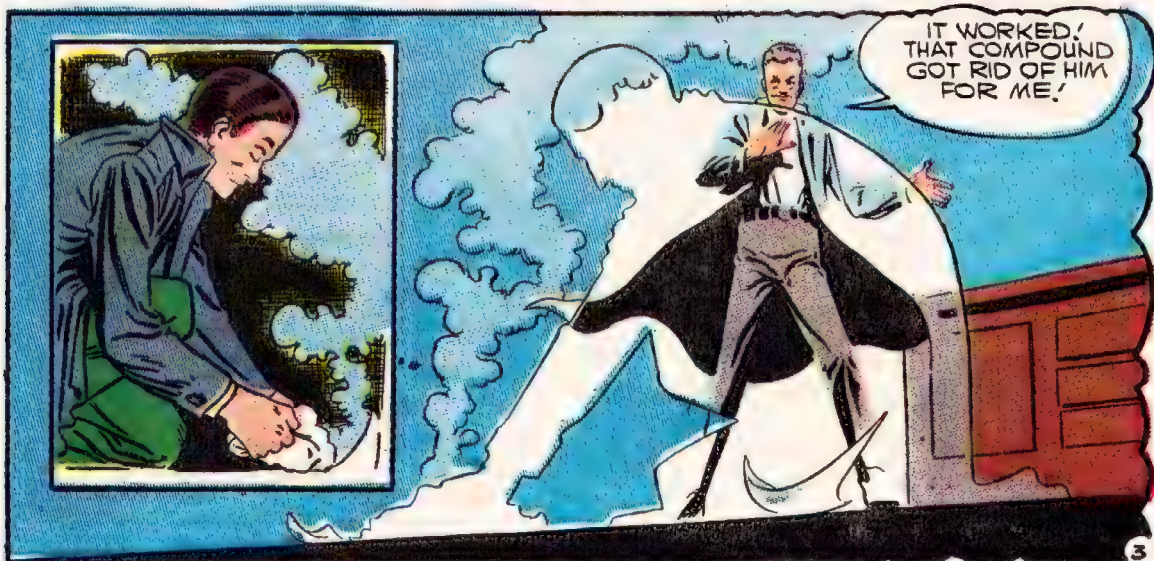
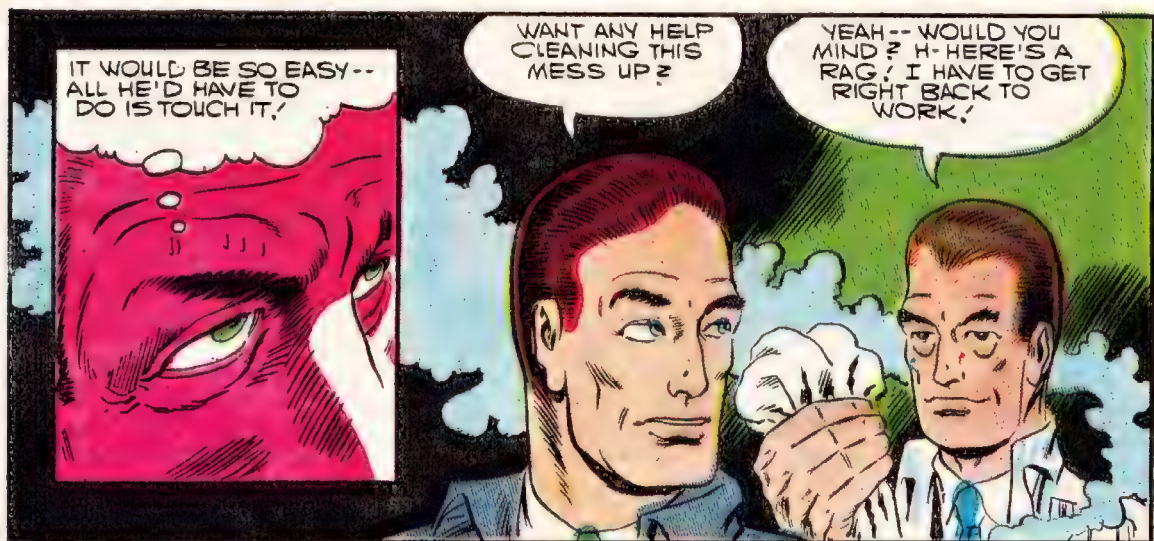
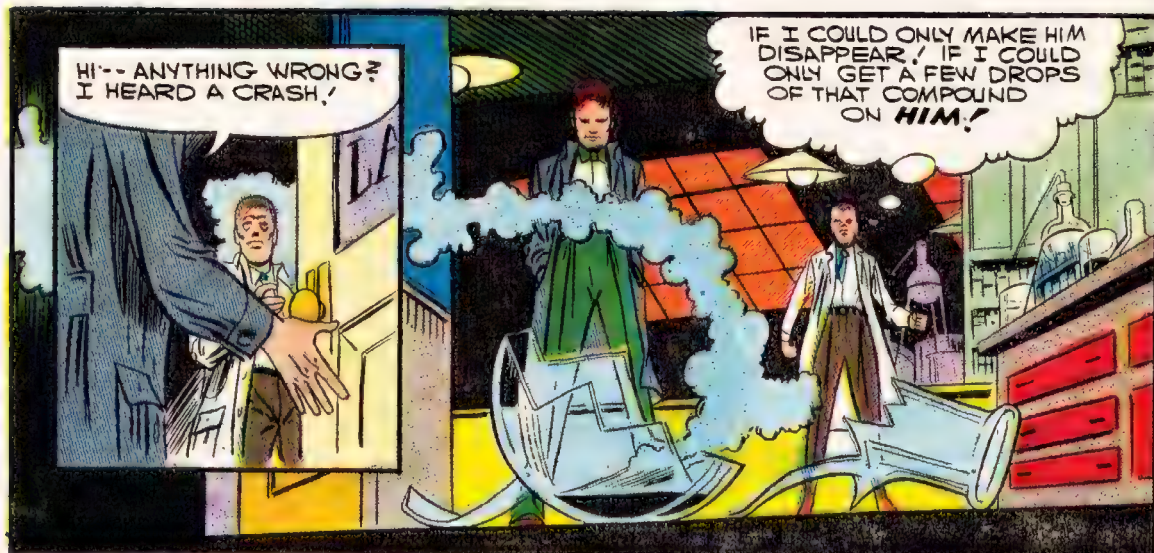
...AND WHAT HAPPENED THEN...



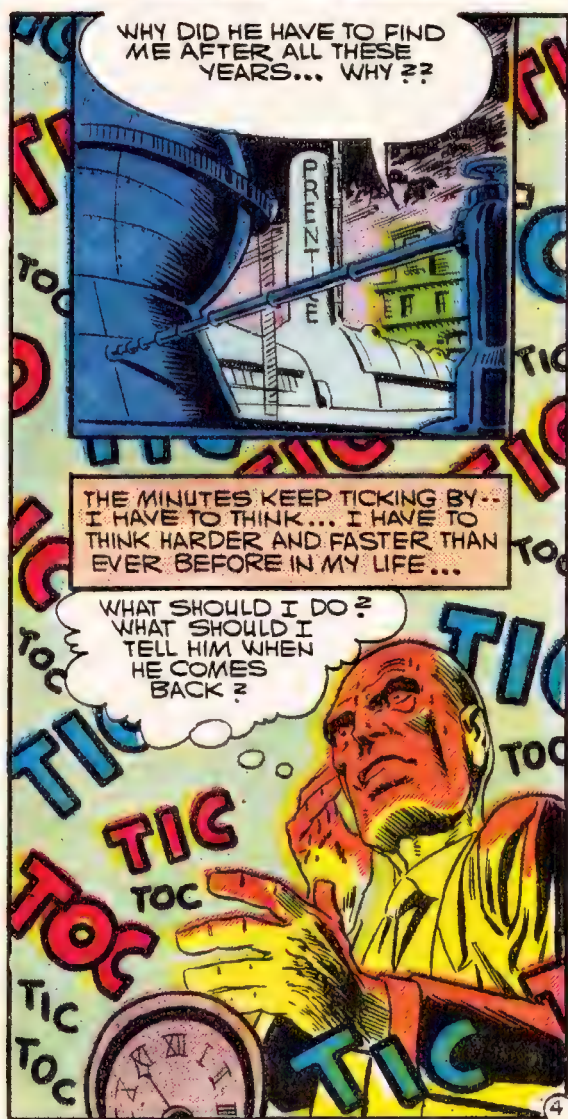
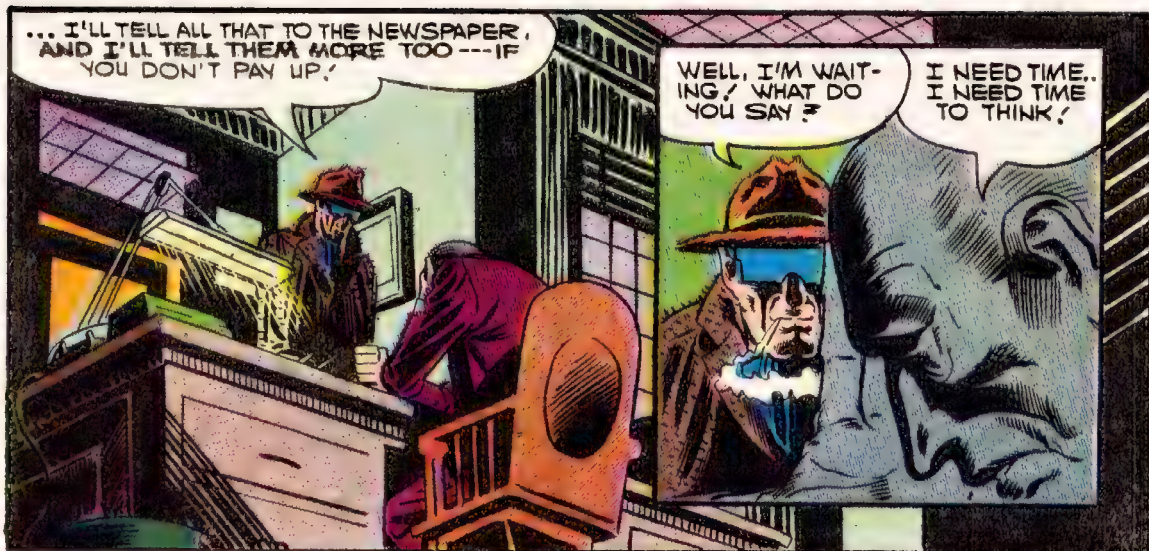
...JUST A FEW DROPS--AND THE DOG DISAPPEARED...



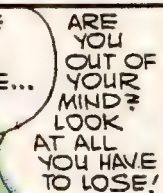
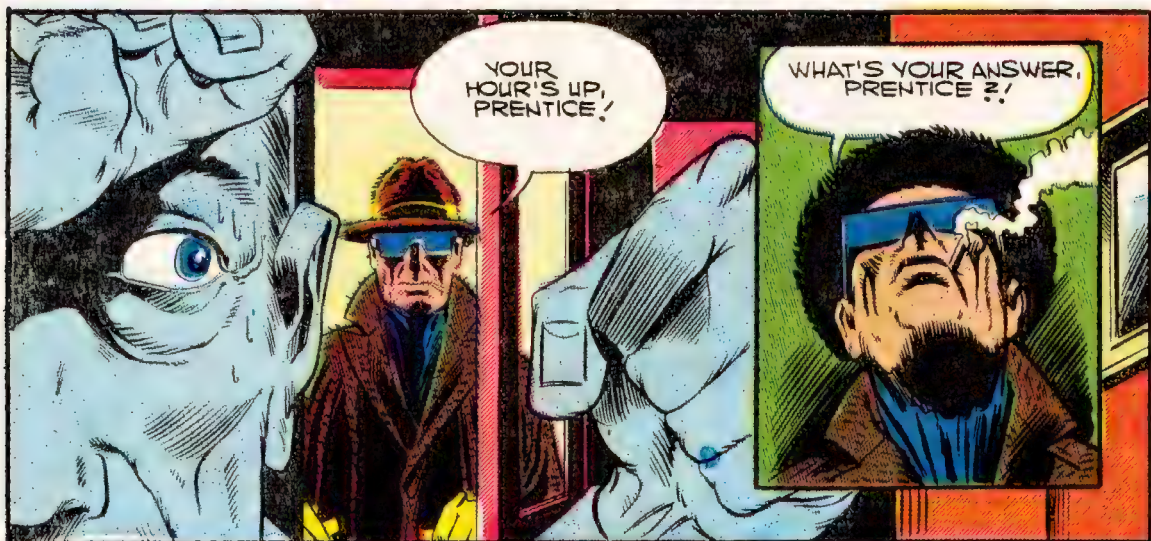
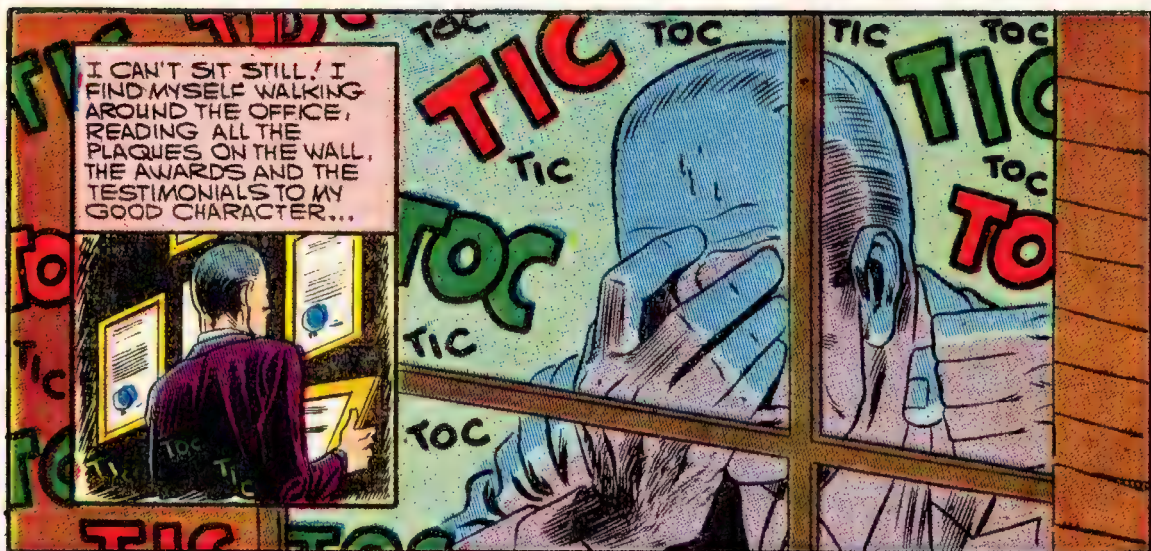




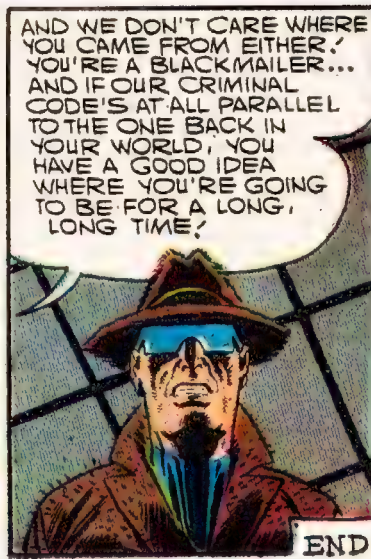
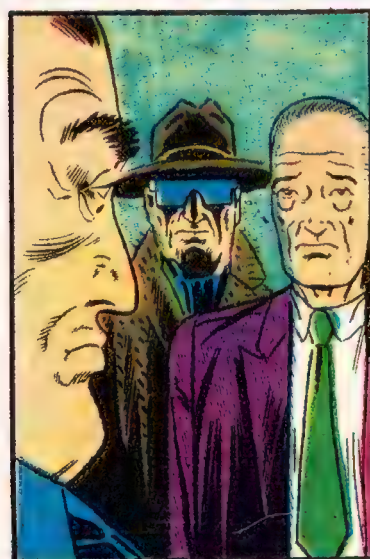
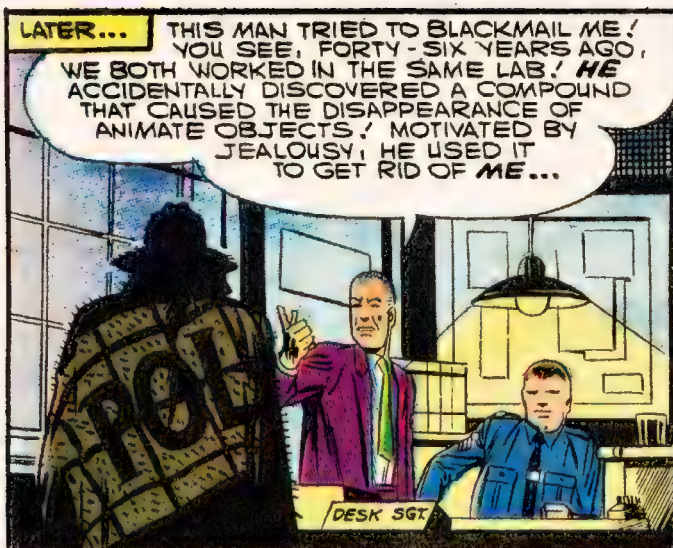












END



DC  
Mysteries of  
UNEEXPLORED WORLDS

MYSTERIES  
OF

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

No 5

10¢

# UNEEXPLORED WORLDS

WHAT BECAME OF  
THE MAN WHO

LIVED FOR VENGEANCE?

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION





WHAT HAPPENS AT A HUNDRED THOUSAND FEET WHEN SPEED IS MEASURED IN HUNDREDS OF MILES A SECOND? IT WAS CAPTAIN AL GIBBONS' JOB TO FIND OUT. THE STUBBY, POWER-PACKED ROCKET WAS LAUNCHED AND THE AIR FORCE PILOT PUNCHED THE FIRING BUTTONS... ONE... TWO... THREE... FOUR! AL'S BODY WAS FLATTENED IN HIS SEAT AND HIS MIND WENT BLANK! HE SAW VISIONS!

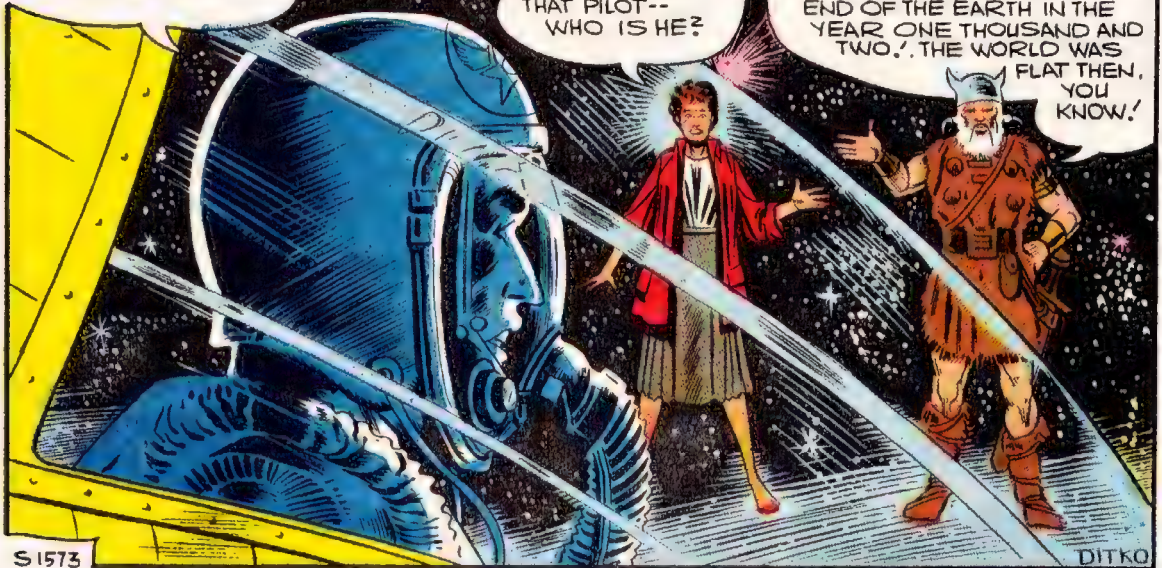
# A DREAMER'S WORLD!

TOO MUCH ACCELERATION! OXYGEN STARVATION WHEN I PASSED THREE THOUSAND MILES AN HOUR, I GUESS! I'VE GOT TO SNAP OUT OF IT!

WHAT AM I DOING HERE? I WAS MIXING IN THE NITROGEN COMPOUND WHEN... THAT PILOT-- WHO IS HE?

ANOTHER DREAMER LIKE OURSELVES, MY DEAR! PERHAPS HE TOO PASSED THE EDGE OF REALITY--AS I DID WHEN I SAILED OFF THE END OF THE EARTH IN THE YEAR ONE THOUSAND AND TWO. THE WORLD WAS

FLAT THEN, YOU KNOW!



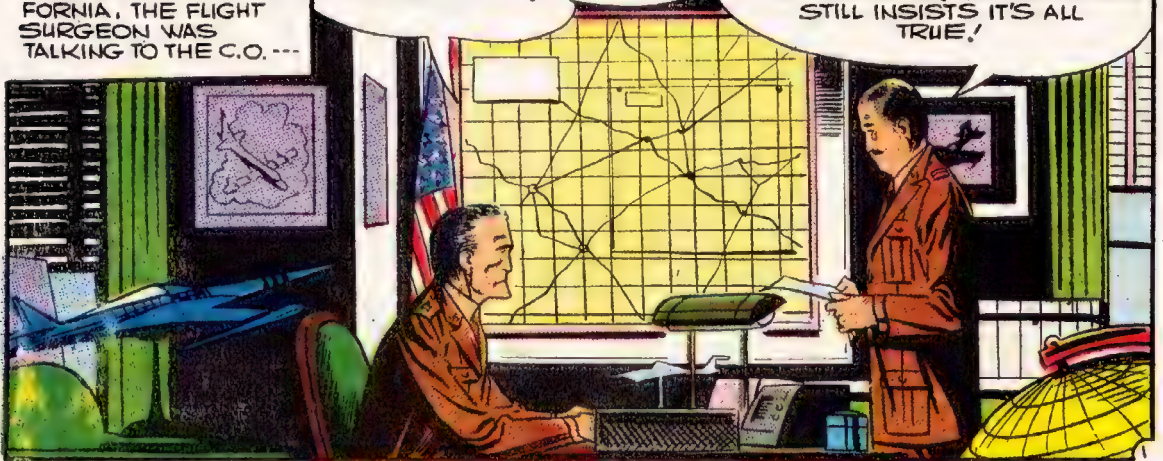
S 1573

DITKO

IN THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS AT A SECRET AIR FORCE BASE IN CALIFORNIA, THE FLIGHT SURGEON WAS TALKING TO THE C.O. ---

BUT CAPTAIN GIBBONS IS ONE OF THE BEST PILOTS WE HAVE. I'D HATE TO GROUND HIM.

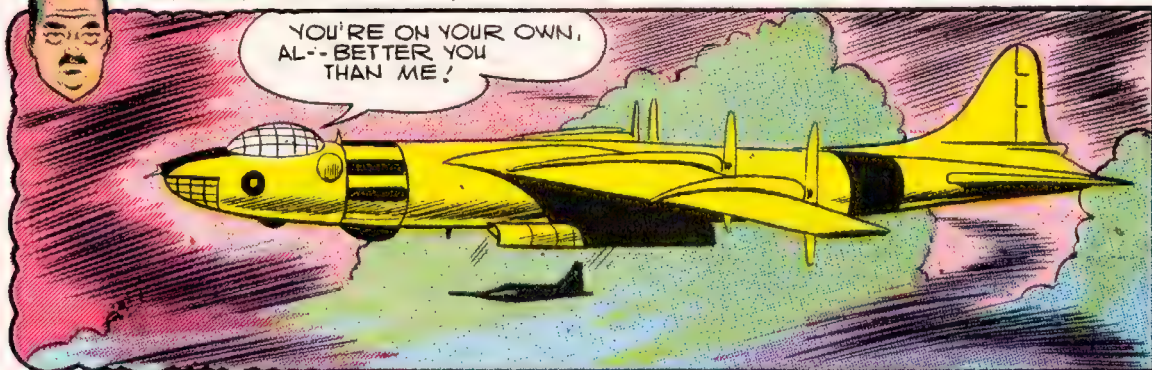
YOU MUST! THIS REPORT HE FILED AFTER HE LANDED THE EXPERIMENTAL ROCKET JOB IS FANTASTIC! AND GIBBONS STILL INSISTS IT'S ALL TRUE!



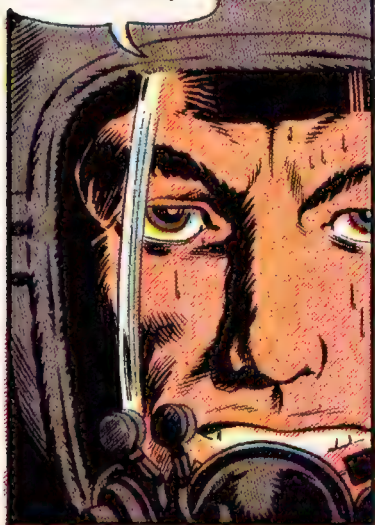


"THE REPORT READ FINE UP UNTIL THE LAUNCHING FROM THE MOTHER SHIP AT FIFTY THOUSAND FEET. THEN...

YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN,  
AL-- BETTER YOU  
THAN ME!



HERE I GO! I'LL GET  
TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND  
POUNDS OF THRUST  
EACH TIME I HIT  
ONE OF THOSE  
BUTTONS!



HE REPORTED EIGHT HUN-  
DRED MILES AN HOUR ON  
THE FIRST ROCKET...

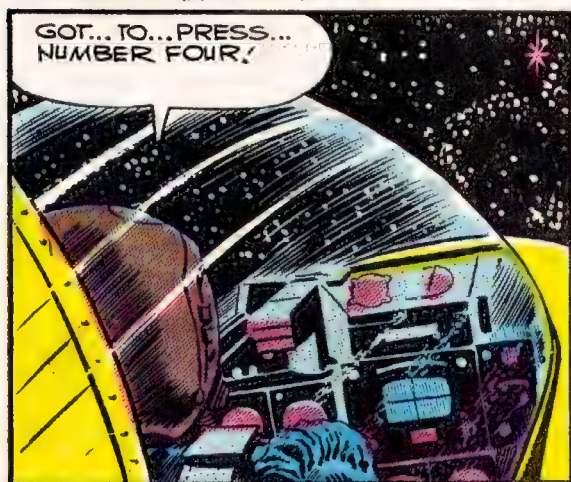


SEVENTEEN HUNDRED ON  
THE SECOND THRUST. HE  
WAS CLIMBING STRAIGHT  
UP...



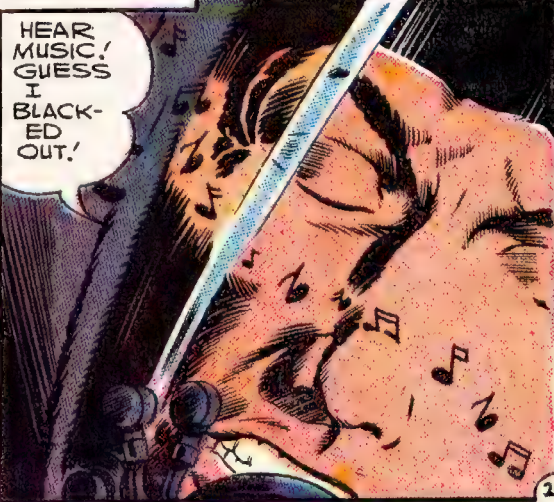
WHOOSH!  
THAT ONE  
ALMOST  
BLACKED  
ME OUT!

AND TWENTY-NINE HUNDRED ON NUMBER  
THREE. HE REPORTS THE SYMPTOMS OF  
OXYGEN STARVATION AT THAT SPEED...



GOT... TO... PRESS...  
NUMBER FOUR!

AT THIS POINT, HIS REPORT BECOMES  
FANTASTIC...

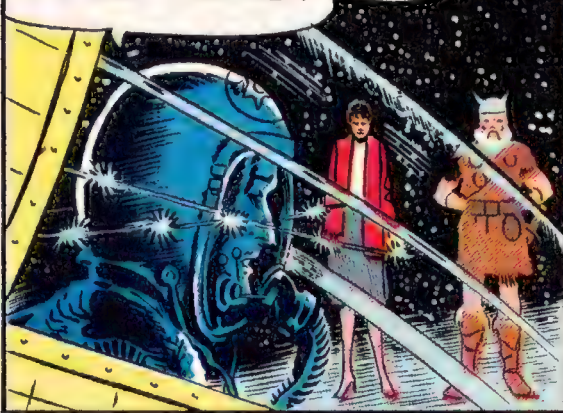


HEAR  
MUSIC!  
GUESS  
I  
BLACK-  
ED  
OUT!

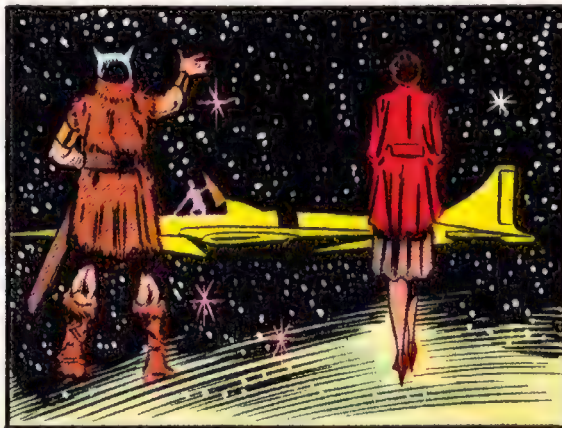


FROM THEN ON, IT'S ALL DELUSION! OXYGEN STARVATION CAUSED IT, NO DOUBT...

I HAD A CRAZY HUNCH SOMETHING LIKE THIS WOULD HAPPEN IF I WENT THIS FAST!

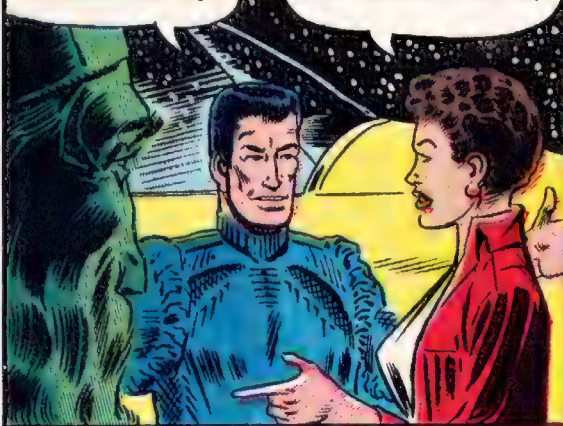


HE INSISTS HE CLIMBED OUT OF THE PLANE AND WALKED OVER TO THESE VISIONS. I REMINDED HIM OF THE PLANE'S ALTITUDE AND SPEED BUT HE SAYS THAT ISN'T IMPORTANT...



SOMEONE HAD BETTER BRIEF ME. WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE AM I?

I'M AS PUZZLED AS YOU, FLYBOY. THE ADMIRAL HERE MIGHT KNOW A FEW ANSWERS!



BOTH OF YOU HAVE PASSED A FORBIDDEN BARRIER. PERHAPS THE BARRIER WAS ONE YOU ERECTED IN YOUR OWN MINDS, BUT IT WAS THERE. ALL OF US HERE IN THIS WORLD HAVE DONE SO.



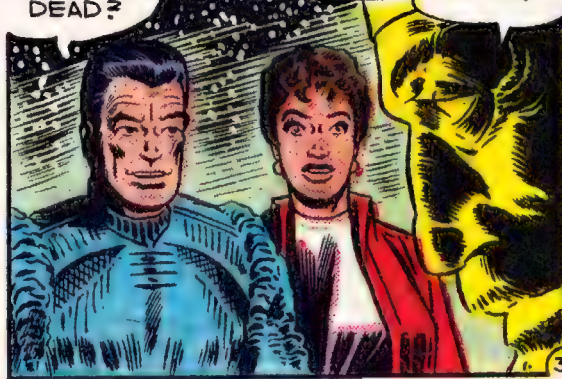
THAT GENTLEMAN WAS A JUDGE IN YOUR COUNTRY. HE'S LOST TO HIS WORLD WHICH STILL WONDERS AT HIS DISAPPEARANCE. WHAT BARRIER HE PASSED NONE OF US KNOW.



WAIT A MINUTE! THESE PEOPLE... YOU... THE OTHERS, ARE ALL DEAD?

I'M NOT!

DEAD IS NOT THE EXACT WORD, CAPTAIN. YOU'VE JUST PASSED A BARRIER, AS I SAID... ENTERED A NEW, A DREAMER'S WORLD!







THIS GENTLEMAN TRIED TO CONQUER THE WORLD.' HE FAILED... DISAPPEARED ONE DARK NIGHT AND FOUND HIMSELF HERE.'



MORE RECENTLY WE HAD SEVERAL MORE 'WORLD CONQUERORS' FORCED ON US.' THEY ARE DESPISED HERE TOO.'

CAPTAIN GIBBONS DESCRIBES HIS DELUSIONS IN SOME DETAIL. THIS DREAM WORLD OF HIS HAD SOME FORM OF GOVERNMENT TOO. THEY HAD A SORT OF CITIZENSHIP RITE THAT MADE THEIR ADMISSION TO THAT WORLD OFFICIAL...



NOW, BEFORE YOUR NAMES ARE ENTERED IN THE RECORDS OF THIS COMMUNITY, HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO SAY?

CAPTAIN, I'M FRIGHTENED! CAN'T WE STOP THIS? DO SOMETHING!



YOU BET WE CAN! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! I'M NOT READY FOR THIS OUTFIT YET.'



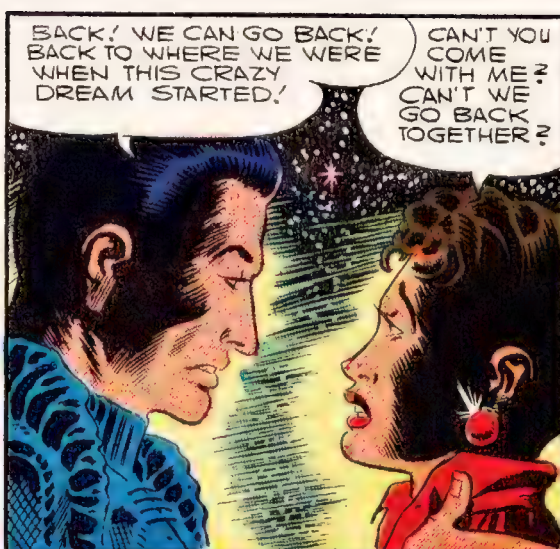
HALT! YOU WILL RETURN AND HAVE YOUR NAMES INSCRIBED AS HERR JUDGE HAS DIRECTED!

GET OUT OF MY WAY BEFORE I SMEAR YOU AGAIN LIKE WE DID IN 1944.'





WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHAT CAN WE DO?

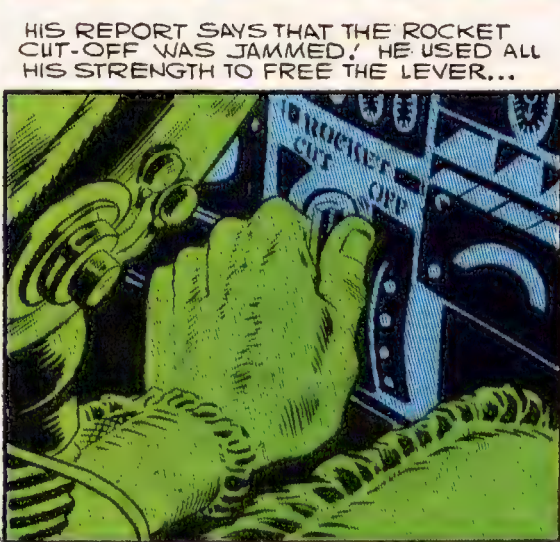


BACK! WE CAN GO BACK! BACK TO WHERE WE WERE WHEN THIS CRAZY DREAM STARTED!

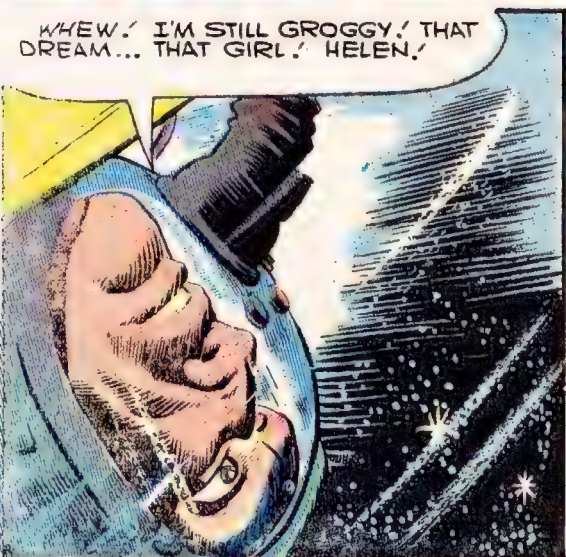
CAN'T YOU COME WITH ME? CAN'T WE GO BACK TOGETHER?



PERHAPS A MISTAKE HAS BEEN MADE! PERHAPS YOU TWO WEREN'T READY TO JOIN OUR GROUP! HURRY BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!



HIS REPORT SAYS THAT THE ROCKET CUT-OFF WAS JAMMED! HE USED ALL HIS STRENGTH TO FREE THE LEVER...



WHEW! I'M STILL GROGGY! THAT DREAM... THAT GIRL! HELEN!



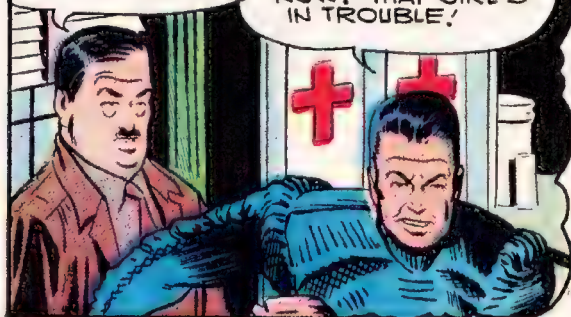
WHERE DID I... WHEN I WAS STANDING WITH HELEN BEFORE THE OLD SEA CAPTAIN! BUT IF THAT WAS TRUE... HELEN IS IN DANGER RIGHT NOW! I MUST GET TO HER!



CAPTAIN GIBBONS USED THE PARABRAKE AND LANDED THE ROCKET SHIP INTACT! HE BECAME ALMOST VIOLENT WHEN I HELD HIM HERE WHILE HE DICTATED THIS REPORT "...

YOU NEED HOSPITAL TREATMENT, CAPTAIN, I'LL ARRANGE...

ARRANGE NOTHING! I'M GRABBING A CAB TO THE COLLEGE OF CHEMISTRY RIGHT NOW, THAT GIRL'S IN TROUBLE!



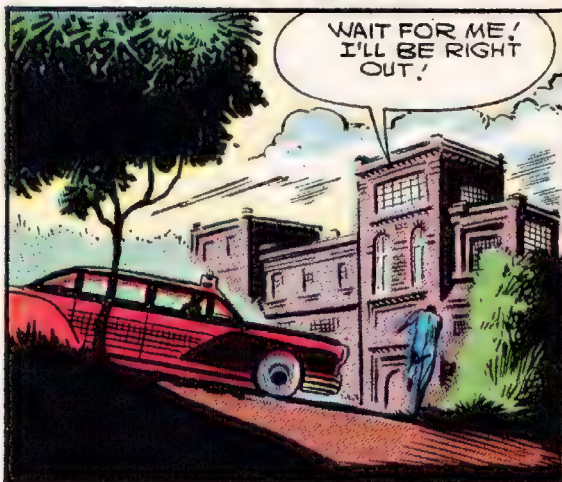
HE EVEN HAD THE QUILL PEN TO PROVE HIS FANTASY! ODD, EH?

POOR DEVIL! I WONDER WHERE HE IS NOW?

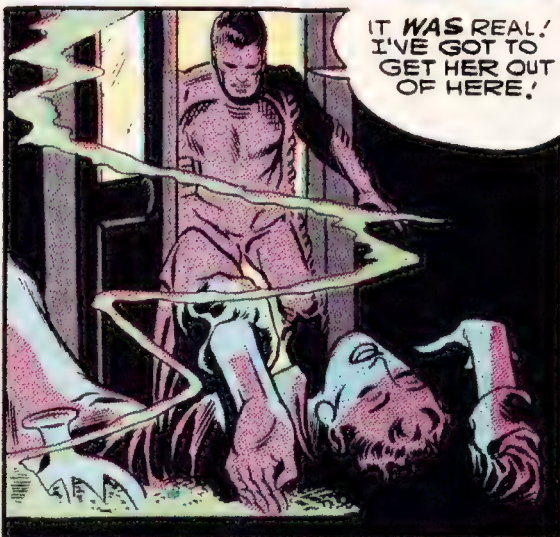


MEANWHILE, IN A CAB NEAR THE LABORATORIES AT THE COLLEGE OF CHEMISTRY...

WAIT FOR ME! I'LL BE RIGHT OUT!



IT WAS REAL! I'VE GOT TO GET HER OUT OF HERE!



THAT... AIR... FEELS GOOD! CAPTAIN, DID... WE GET AWAY?



AND WHILE CAPTAIN GIBBONS HELD HIS FLESH AND BLOOD 'DREAM' GIRL THE FLIGHT SURGEON MADE HIS REPORT!

YOU MUST GROUND CAPTAIN GIBBONS UNTIL HE GETS OVER HIS DELUSIONS ABOUT THAT DREAM GIRL OF HIS!



END



# THE MAN WHO COULD SEE TOMORROW



ME? I'M A PLAIN JOE! SO WHEN ALL THIS CRAZY STUFF STARTS HAPPENING, IT HITS ME LIKE A TON OF BRICKS! I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF IT -- IT SCARES ME!

CAN'T FIND A THING WRONG WITH YOU! YOU COULDN'T BE IN BETTER SHAPE IF YOU TRIED!

BUT MY EYES, DOC! DID YOU CHECK MY EYES?!

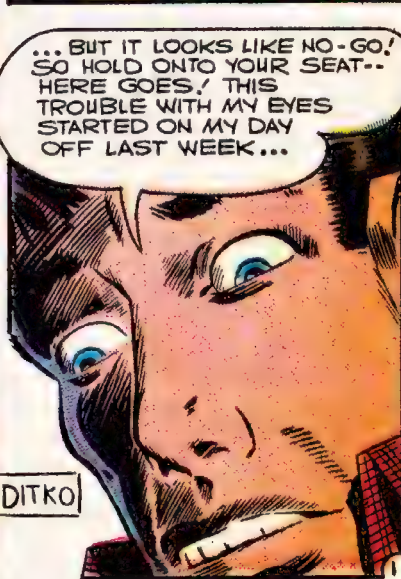


YES, YOU'RE SLIGHTLY NEAR-SIGHTED! BUT NOT EVEN ENOUGH TO NEED GLASSES!

I - I WAS KIND OF HOPING YOU'D BE ABLE TO TELL ME WHAT WAS WRONG, DOC, WITHOUT MY HAVING TO SPILL THE WHOLE STORY...



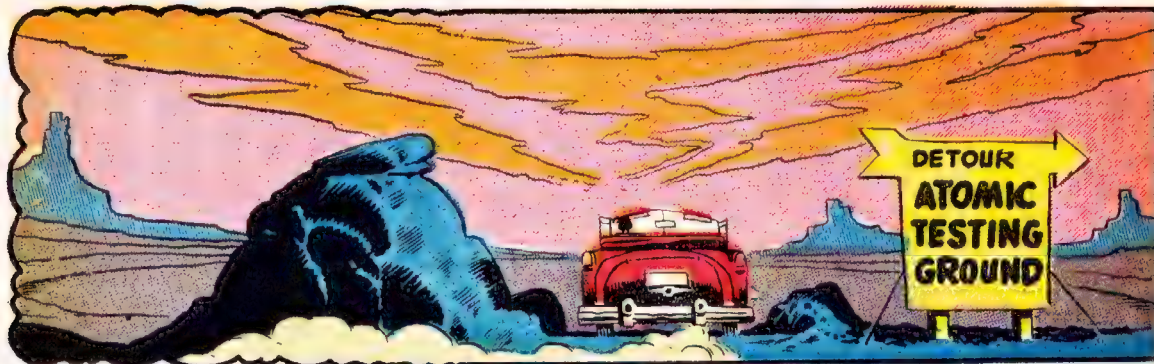
... BUT IT LOOKS LIKE NO-GO! SO HOLD ONTO YOUR SEAT-- HERE GOES! THIS TROUBLE WITH MY EYES STARTED ON MY DAY OFF LAST WEEK...



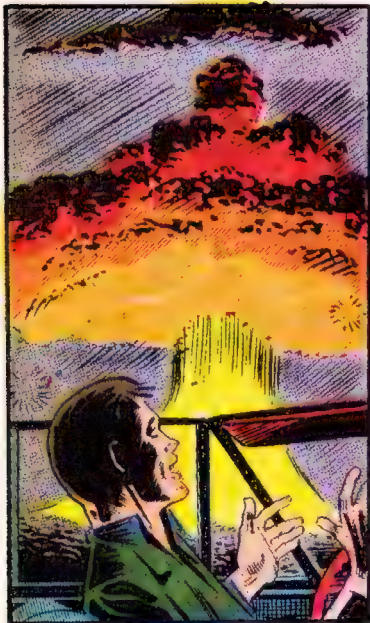
DITKO



..I WAS TAKING A RIDE OUT ON THE DESERT ROAD! GUESS I HAD A LOT ON MY MIND--  
AND THAT'S HOW COME I DIDN'T SPOT THAT SIGN...



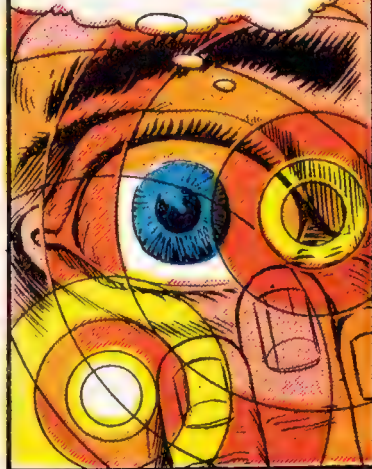
THE NEXT THING I KNEW...



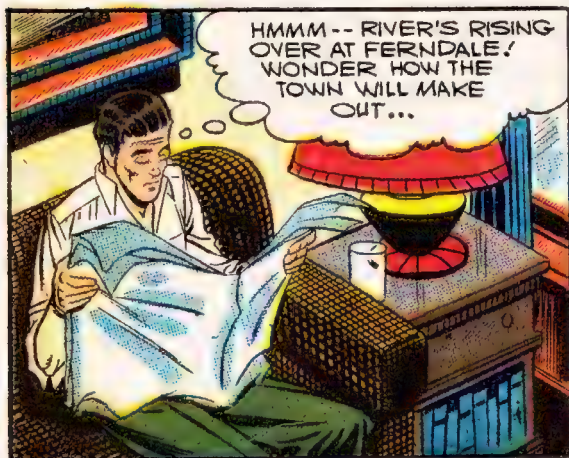
AT FIRST, I  
COULDN'T SEE  
ANYTHING AT ALL...

BUT THEN AFTER A WHILE...

EVERYTHING'S CLEAR  
AGAIN! 'WHEW-- THAT  
WAS CLOSE! FOR A  
MOMENT I THOUGHT  
MY EYESIGHT WAS  
A GONER FOR SURE!

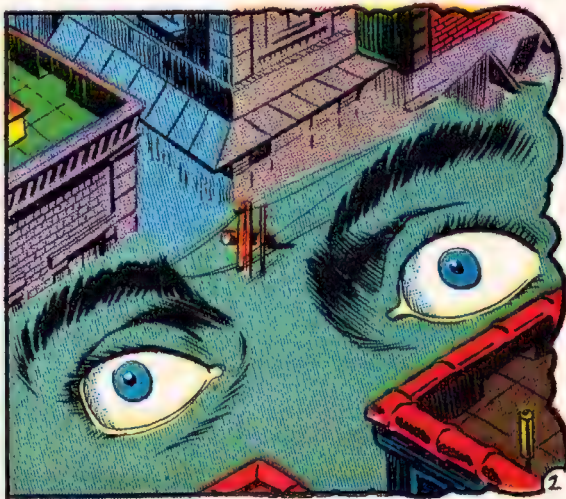


I U-TURNED AS FAST AS I COULD, AND I  
KEPT TELLING MYSELF I WAS A LUCKY GUY  
ALL THE WAY HOME! WHEN I GOT TO THE  
HOUSE, I SAT DOWN WITH THE PAPER...



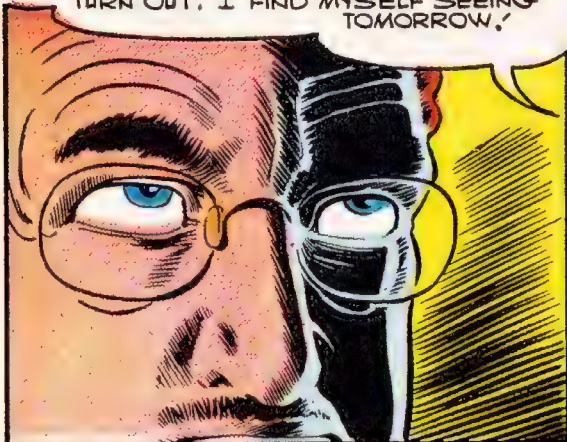
HMMM-- RIVER'S RISING  
OVER AT FERNDAL!?  
WONDER HOW THE  
TOWN WILL MAKE  
OUT...

AND THEN IT HAPPENED, DOC! I SAW  
TOMORROW IN FERNDAL!..





...THE NEXT DAY'S PAPERS SHOWED THAT I'D SEEN RIGHT, AND IT'S HAPPENED TWICE SINCE THEN, DOC. EVERY TIME I WONDER HOW SOMETHING'S GOING TO TURN OUT, I FIND MYSELF SEEING TOMORROW.



I DON'T LIKE IT... IT SCARES ME! I'M JUST A PLAIN JOE! PLEASE, DOC, TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD DO!

HMMM...



...I SHOULD SAY THE BEST THING WOULD BE FOR YOU TO TAKE A REST. YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY BEEN UNDER A STRAIN LATELY, AND...

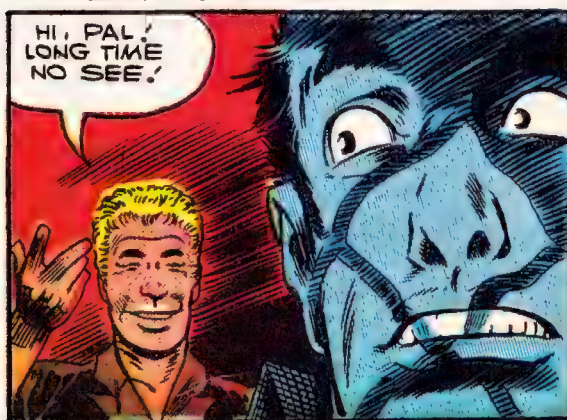
YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME?



HOW CAN YOU HELP ME... IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME?



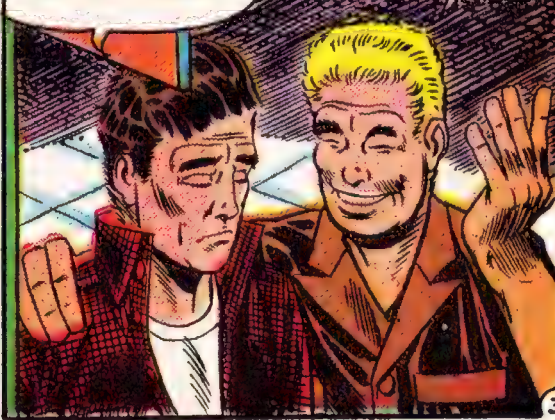
AFTER I LEAVE THE DOC, I KEEP WALKING THE STREETS. I KEEP TRYING TO FORGET THAT HE THOUGHT I WAS CRAZY -- BUT I CAN'T. I HAVE TO TELL ALL THIS TO SOMEBODY WHO'LL BELIEVE ME -- OR I'LL BUST...! SUDDENLY...



HI, PAL! LONG TIME NO SEE!

DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE, HERB? PLEASE -- I... I HAVE TO GET SOMETHING OFF MY CHEST!

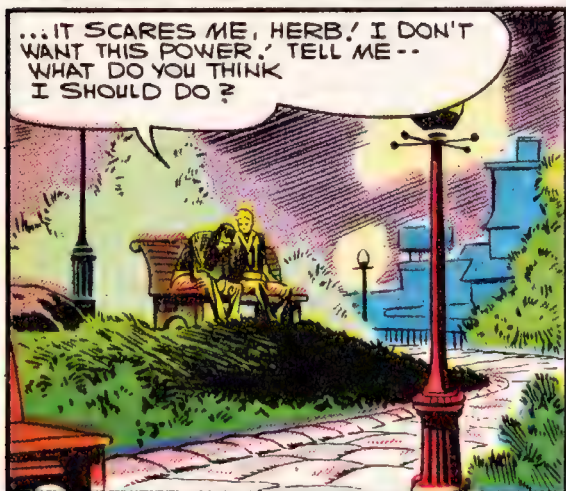
SURE PAL -- WHY NOT? LET'S GO SOMEPLACE WHERE WE CAN SIT DOWN!





SO I TELL HERB JUST WHAT I TOLD THE DOC,' AND WHEN I'M FINISHED...

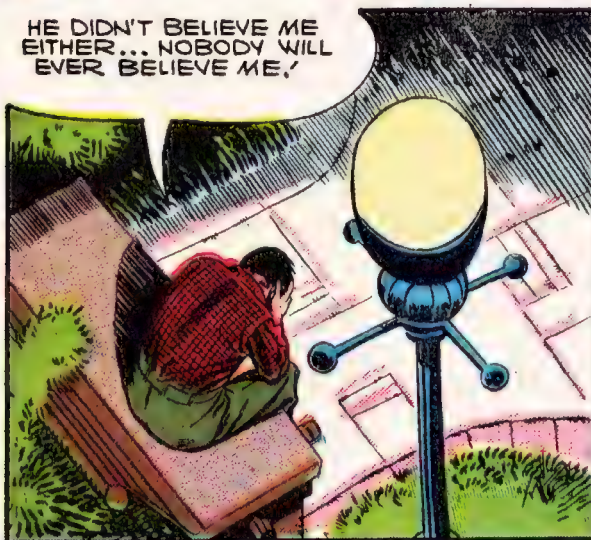
...IT SCARES ME, HERB! I DON'T WANT THIS POWER,' TELL ME -- WHAT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD DO?



HMPF -- I THINK YOU SHOULD GO ON THE WAGON,' YOU MUST BE HITTING THE BOTTLE PLENTY TO BELIEVE MALARKY LIKE THAT.'



HE DIDN'T BELIEVE ME EITHER... NOBODY WILL EVER BELIEVE ME.'

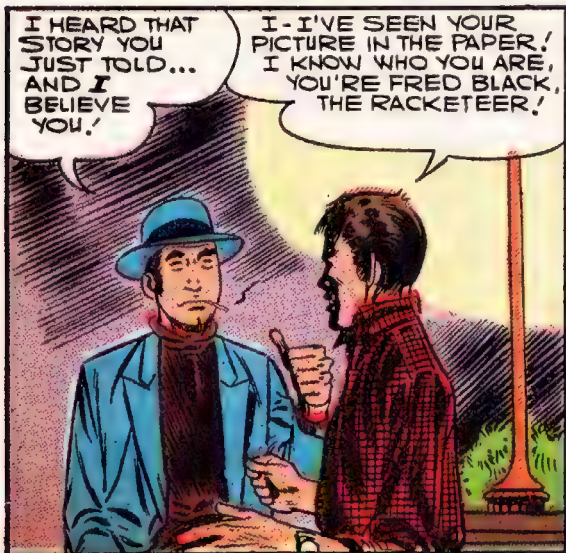


HEY, BUB,'



I HEARD THAT STORY YOU JUST TOLD... AND I BELIEVE YOU.'

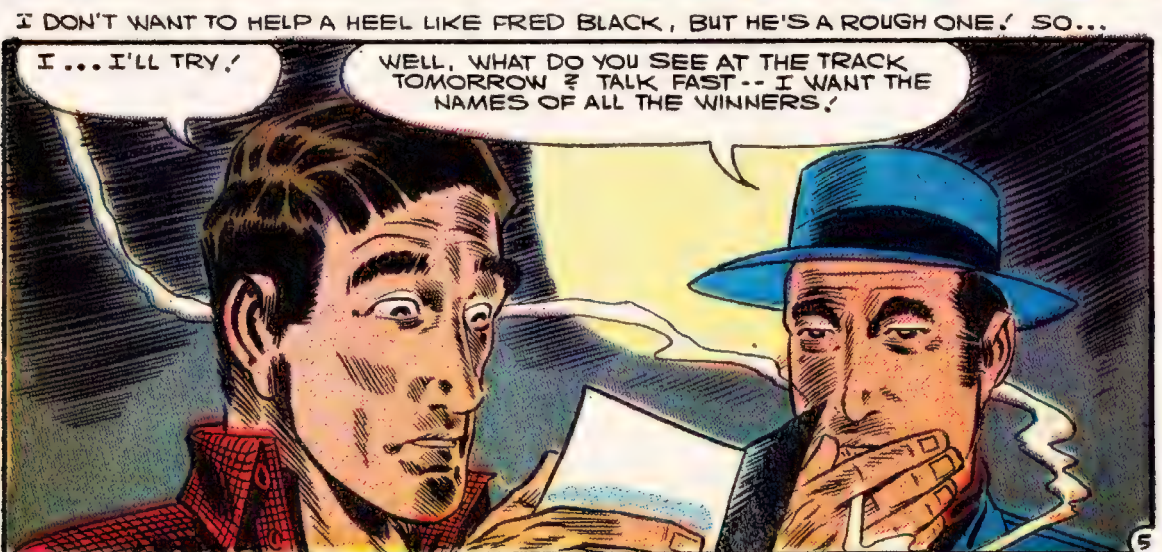
I - I'VE SEEN YOUR PICTURE IN THE PAPER,' I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, YOU'RE FRED BLACK, THE RACKETEER.'



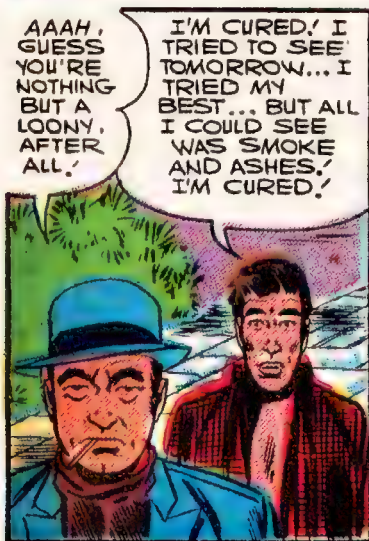
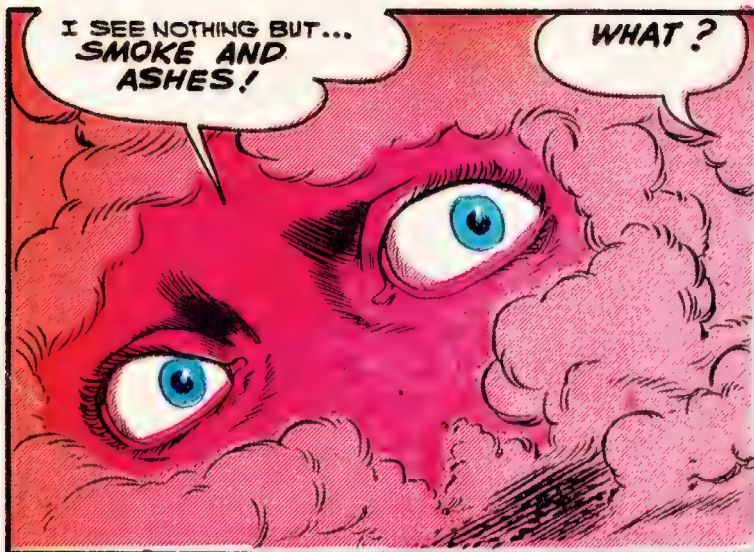
THAT'S RIGHT,' AND I'M HARD UP FOR CASH RIGHT NOW,' IF I DON'T GET MY HANDS ON SOME SOON, SOMEBODY I OWE DOUGH TO IS GOING TO GIVE ME A ROUGH GOING OVER,' BUT YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME.'











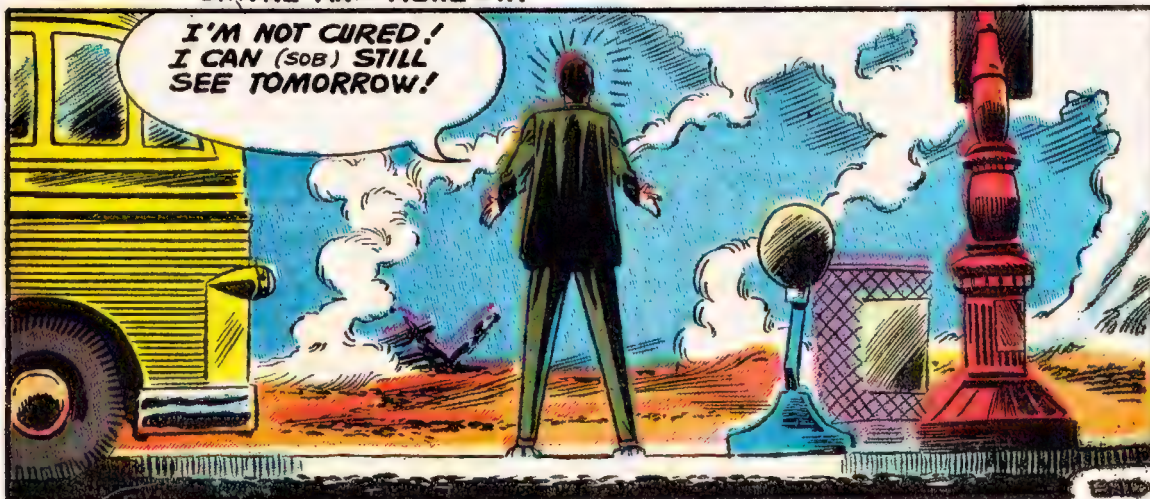
WHEW! WHAT A RELIEF! TO BE NOTHING BUT A PLAIN JOE! I GO HOME AND FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS WEEK I SLEEP RIGHT THROUGH THE NIGHT...



IT'S THE NEXT DAY NOW-- MY DAY OFF AGAIN, AND JUST FOR KICKS, I HEAD FOR THE RACETRACK TO SEE WHAT I HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO SEE YESTERDAY.' BUT THE SPLIT-SECOND I GET OFF THE BUS...



THERE WAS A FIRE HERE LAST NIGHT... AND NOTHING'S LEFT TODAY OF THE RACE-TRACK BUT **SMOKE AND ASHES...**





Tales of the Mysterious Traveler



TALES OF THE



No 4

# MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

10¢







TALES  
OF THE

MYSTERIOUS  
TRAVELER

The

# DESERT

ALWAYS FOUR MEN HAD TRAVELED THERE FROM THE WEATHER STATION. BUT BLIZZARDS HAD COME EARLY THIS YEAR AND THE GREAT NAVY EXPLORER, ADMIRAL CURTIN, AND AINSWORTH, THE YOUNG CIVILIAN METEOROLOGIST, WHO HAD GONE AHEAD TO THE DESOLATE WEATHER OUTPOST FIFTY MILES FROM THE NORTH POLE, WERE ISOLATED. FOR FIVE MONTHS THEY LIVED THROUGH THE ARCTIC NIGHT IN THE SMALL SNOW-CAVE, SEEING NO OTHER HUMAN BEINGS BUT EACH OTHER!

AINSWORTH, YOU'RE A FOOL. YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT BACK TO THE WEATHER STATION. NEVER.

I'LL MAKE IT ALL RIGHT, ADMIRAL! AND DON'T TRY TO STOP ME. IT'S LIGHT NOW. THE SUN'S FINALLY COME UP AND I'M NOT LOOKING AT YOUR UGLY FACE ANY MORE.

NORTH  
POLE

51591

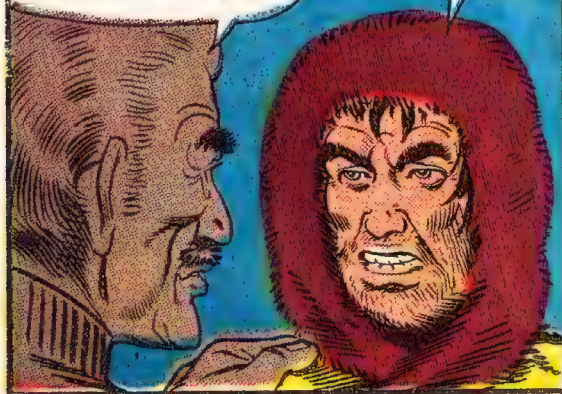
DITKO

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, OLEY? IT'S OUR BEING SHUT IN HERE TOGETHER ALL THESE MONTHS. IT'S KNOWN AS CABIN FEVER. IT'S JUST AS HARD FOR ME.

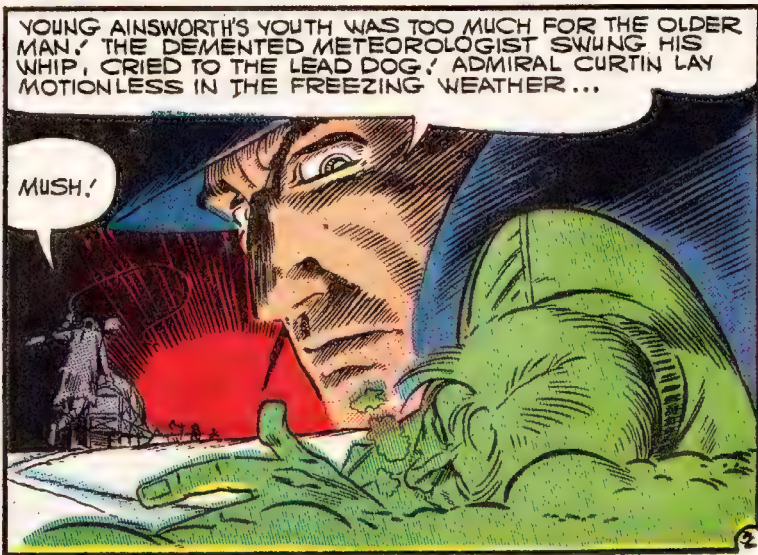
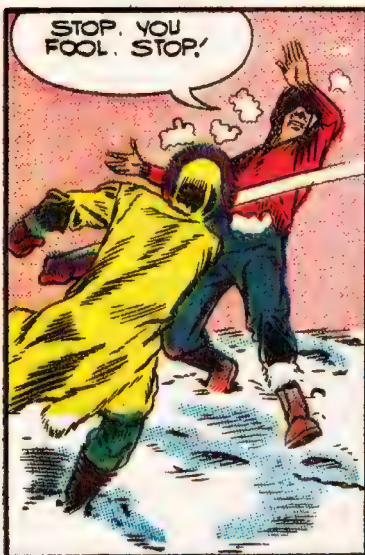
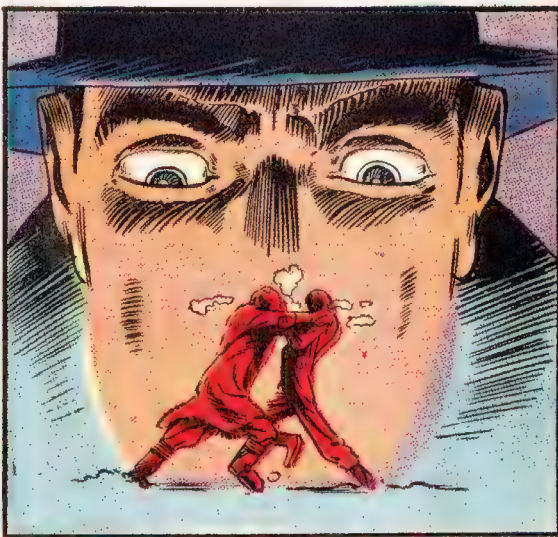
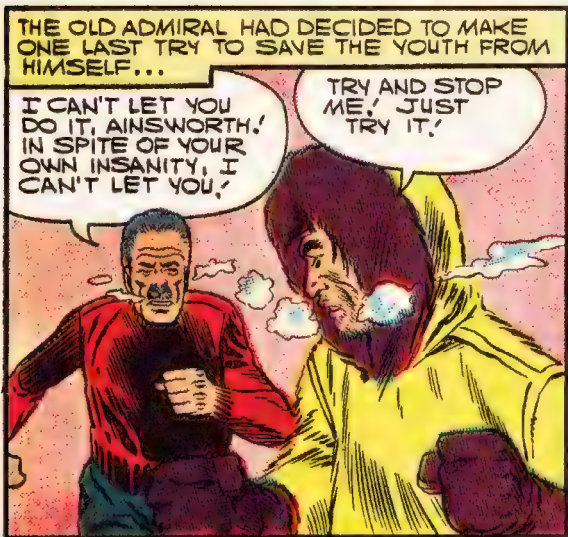
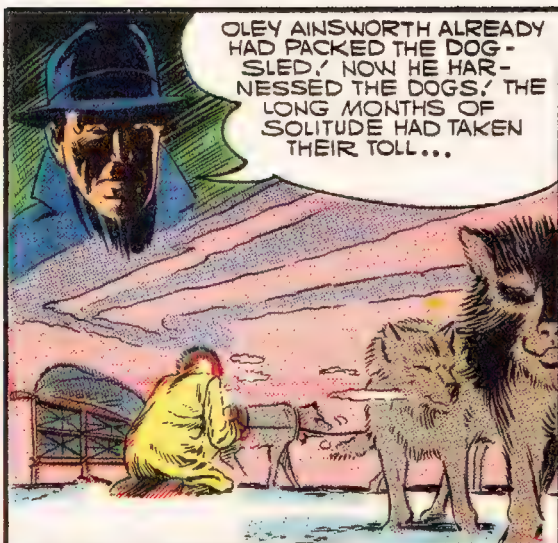
GET OUT OF MY WAY. ADMIRAL, I HATE THE SIGHT OF YOU!

BY THUNDER, I BELIEVE YOU'RE FOOL ENOUGH TO TRY IT.

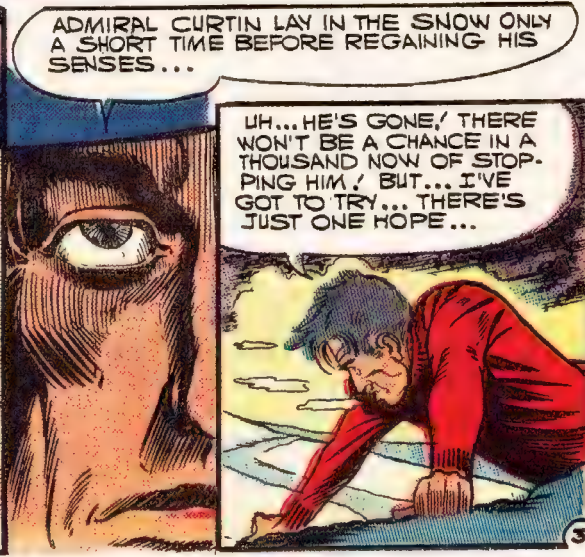
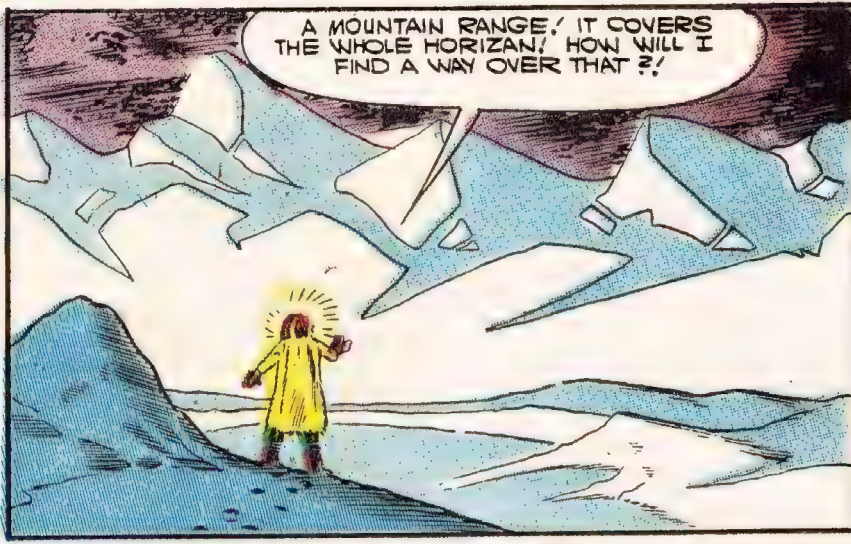
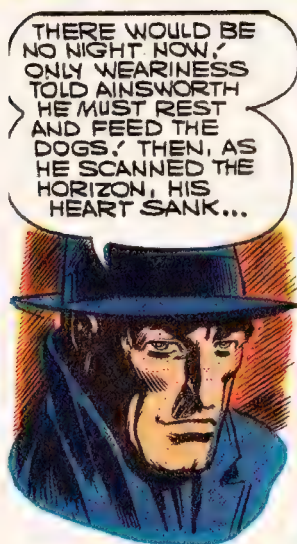
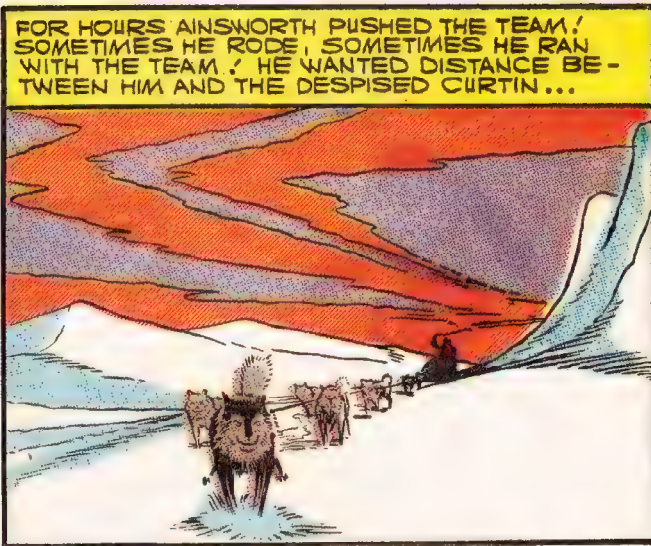
SO LONG, ADMIRAL! YOU CAN'T PULL YOUR RANK ON ME. I'M A CIVILIAN!



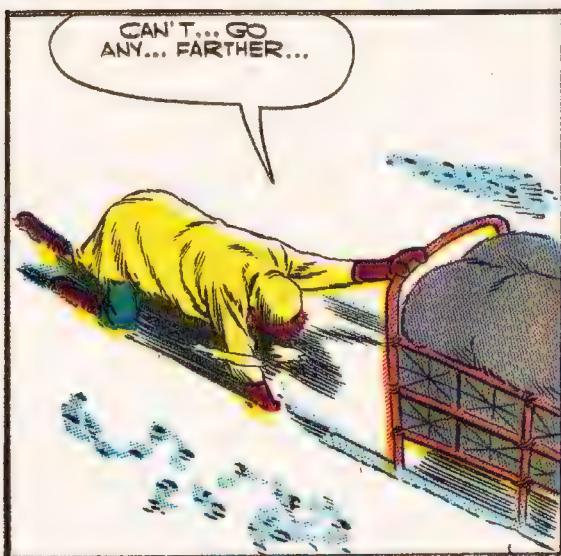
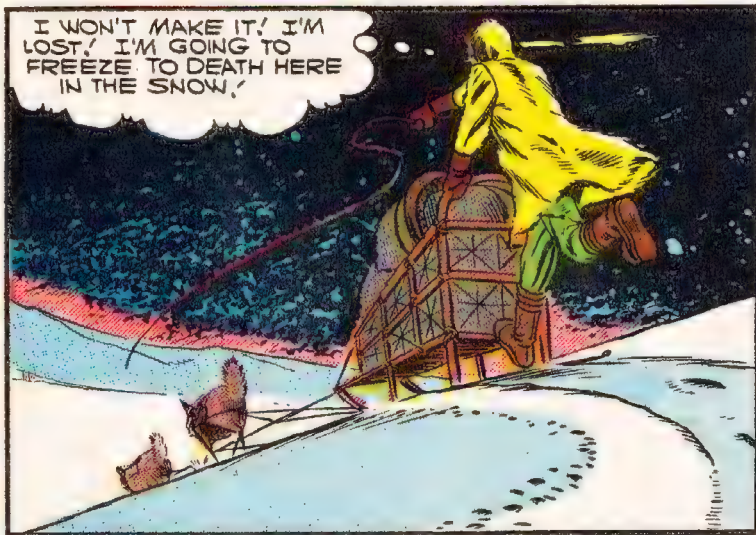
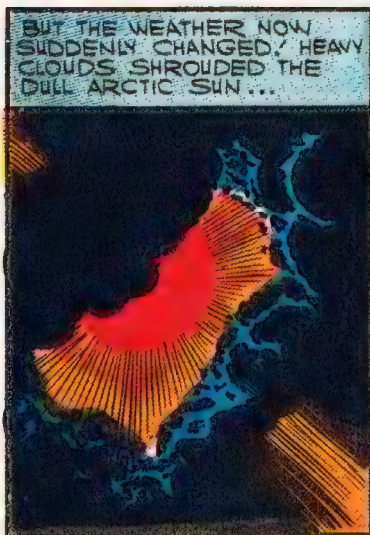




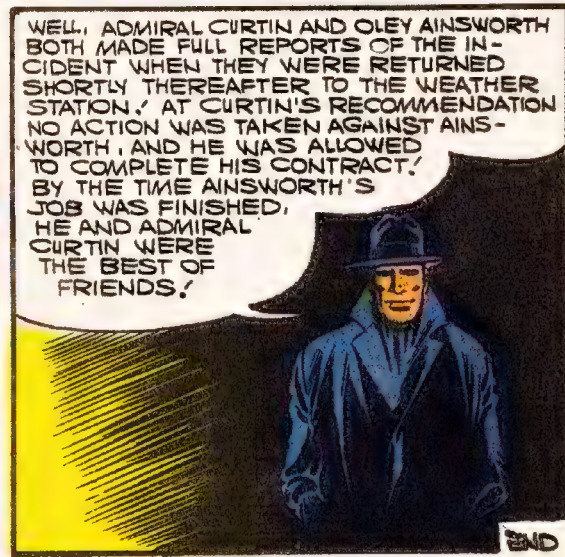
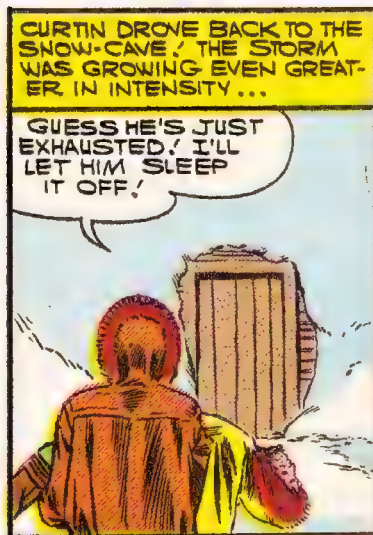
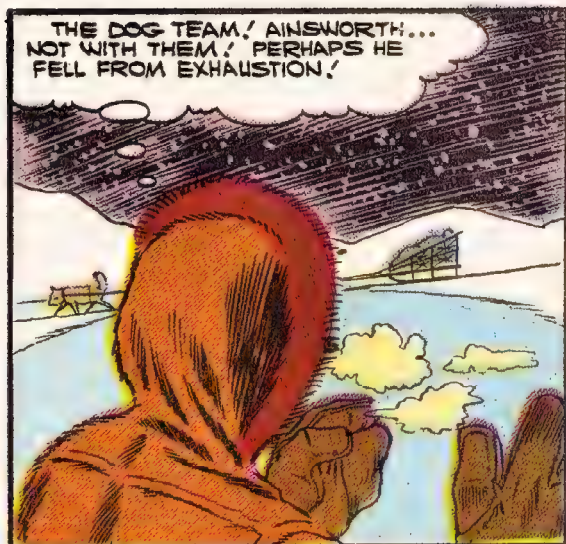














Tales of the Mysterious Traveler



TALES OF THE

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

# MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

10¢



SECRET MISSION

THE END  
OF THE MEDIUM

THE  
'MAN WHO  
CAME BACK

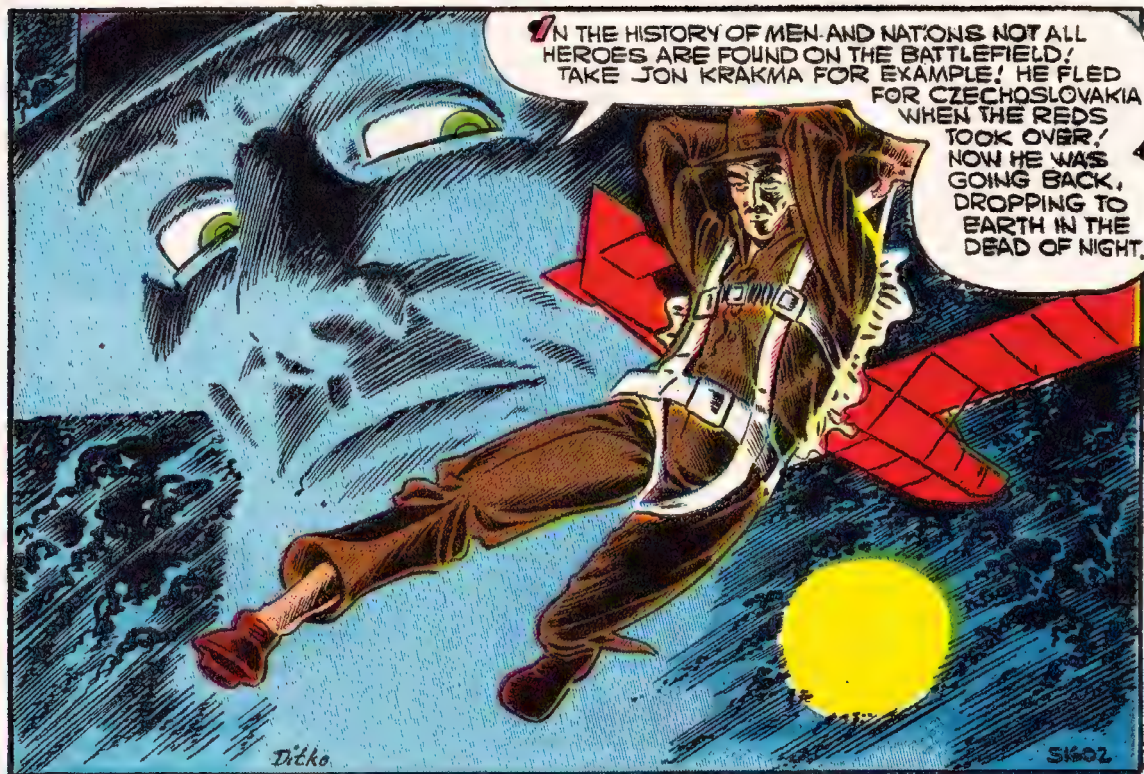




**MYSTERIOUS  
TRAVELER**

# SECRET

## Mission



IN THE HISTORY OF MEN AND NATIONS NOT ALL HEROES ARE FOUND ON THE BATTLEFIELD! TAKE JON KRAKMA FOR EXAMPLE! HE FLED FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA WHEN THE REDS TOOK OVER! NOW HE WAS GOING BACK, DROPPING TO EARTH IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT!

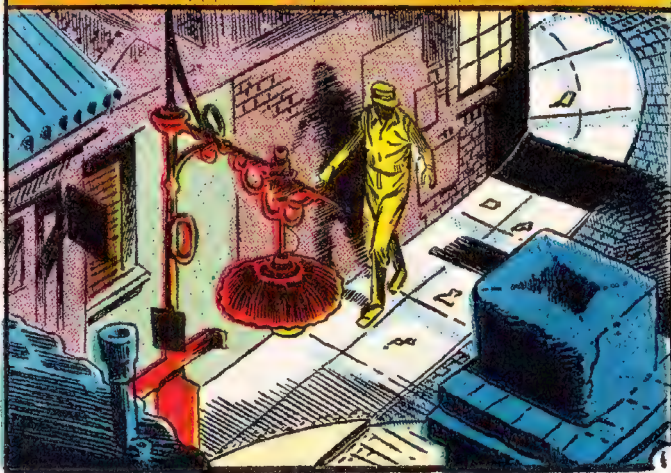
*Ditko*

SK02

WHAT USE COULD HE BE TO THE FREE WORLD WHO HAD SENT HIM BACK TO HIS HOMELAND? HE WAS A HUNTED REFUGEE, AND AN ARTIST!

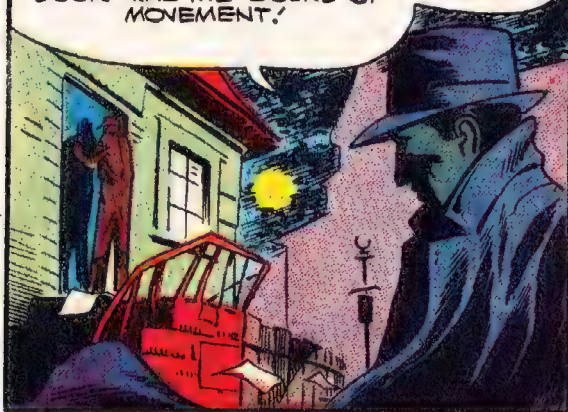


HE HAD COME DOWN NOT FAR FROM THE CITY OF PRAGUE! NOW HE HURRIED STEALTHILY, SEEMING TO KNOW JUST WHERE HE WAS GOING ...





ONE SECRET WAS THAT JON KRAKMA HAD NOT RETURNED AS HIMSELF, BUT AS JON BOLIVICH, AN INDUSTRIAL ARTIST! HE STOPPED AT A CERTAIN DOOR AND KNOCKED LIGHTLY! BEYOND THE DOOR WAS THE SOUND OF MOVEMENT!



MIKYA OLOVRA?

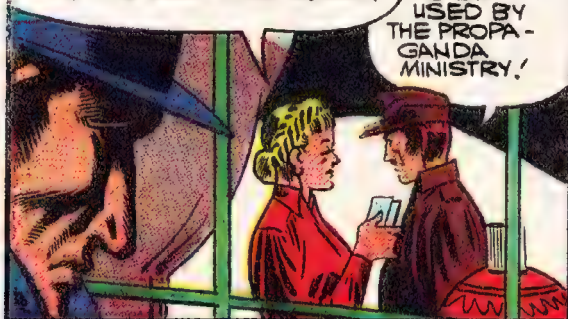
COME IN, COMRADE BOLIVICH! YOU HAVE BROUGHT THE PAPERS?



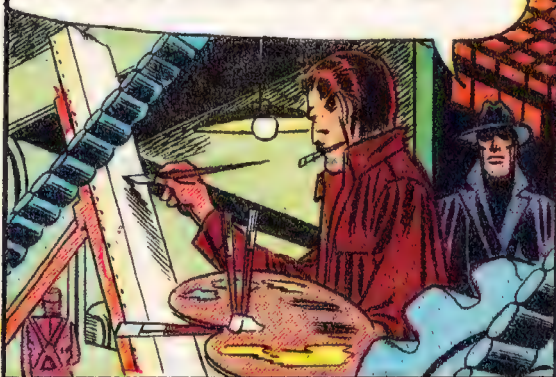
MIKYA OLOVRA HAD WORKED LONG WITH THE FREE UNDERGROUND! SHE WAS BRILLIANT, CLEVER! THE RED OVERLORDS DID NOT SUSPECT HER...

YOUR CREDENTIALS ARE WELL FORGED, JON KRAKMA! I HAVE ARRANGED FOR YOU TO MEET THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUNITIONS WORKS!

I UNDERSTAND I AM TO MAKE INDUSTRIAL PAINTINGS TO BE USED BY THE PROPAGANDA MINISTRY!



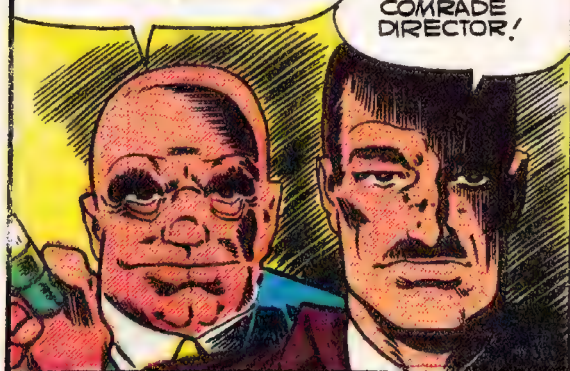
THERE WAS NO QUESTION ON THE PART OF THE WORKS DIRECTOR, NIKOLAI VOROSHEV, OF JON'S CREDENTIALS! HE WAS PLACED IN THE GREAT MUNITIONS WORKS TO CAPTURE ON CANVAS THE POWER OF THE RED EMPIRE'S INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH!



BUT THE DIRECTOR SEEMED FASCINATED BY JON'S TALENT! JON MADE GOOD USE OF THE COMRADE'S INTEREST...

YOU DO GREAT SERVICE TO THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY, COMRADE BOLIVICH!

BUT I HAVE NOT YET DONE SERVICE TO OUR GREAT COMRADE DIRECTOR!



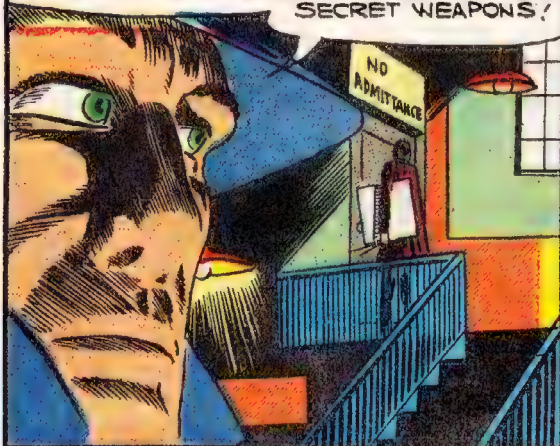
PERHAPS THE COMRADE DIRECTOR WOULD ALLOW ME TO PAINT HIS PORTRAIT--AND PERHAPS THAT OF HIS FAMILY?

EH... PERHAPS-- PERHAPS!





THE PAINTING OF THE DIRECTOR'S PORTRAIT FLATTERED THE MAN'S VANITY. / SOON JON HAD THE RUN OF THE WORKS, EVEN ENTRY TO THE DIVISION THAT MANUFACTURED SECRET WEAPONS. /



NO DETAIL OF SECRET PRODUCTION ESCAPED JON'S EYE, TRAINED IN OBSERVATION. / WHAT HE OBSERVED HE RECORDED ON THE DRY OIL PICTURES HE COMPLETED, USING A COLORLESS PAINT, IN-VISIBLE IN THE LIGHT. /



AS EACH PAINTING WAS COMPLETED IT WAS TAKEN FROM JON AT THE FACTORY BY MIKYA OLOVRA...

THE PROPAGANDA MINISTRY IS PLEASED WITH YOUR WORK, COMRADE BOLOVICH. /

I AM GLAD! I HAVE GIVEN OUR GREAT DEMOCRACY MY BEST WORK! /



IN THE DARKNESS OF HER OWN ROOM, MIKYA TOOK OFF THE INFORMATION JON HAD PAINTED ON HIS PICTURES IN FAINTLY LUMINOUS PAINT...



BY THE FOLLOWING MORNING THE LUMINOUS PAINT HAD DISINTEGRATED. / THEN MIKYA DELIVERED THE PAINTING TO THE PROPAGANDA MINISTRY. /



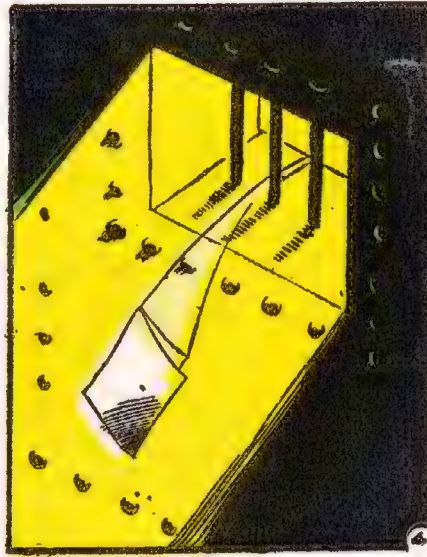
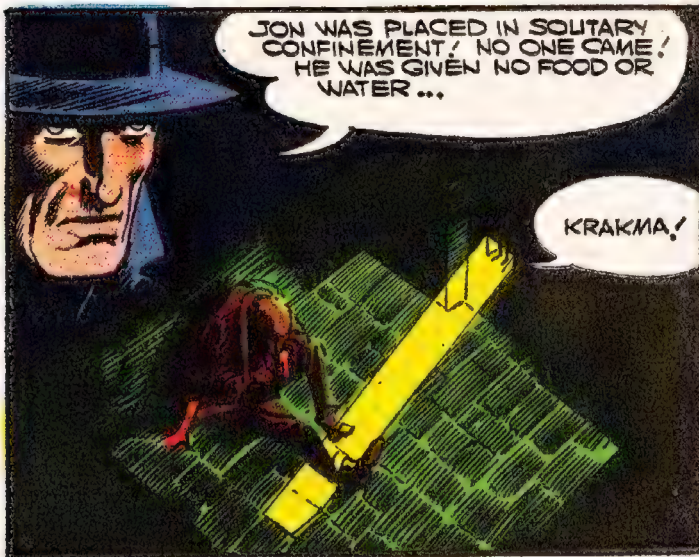
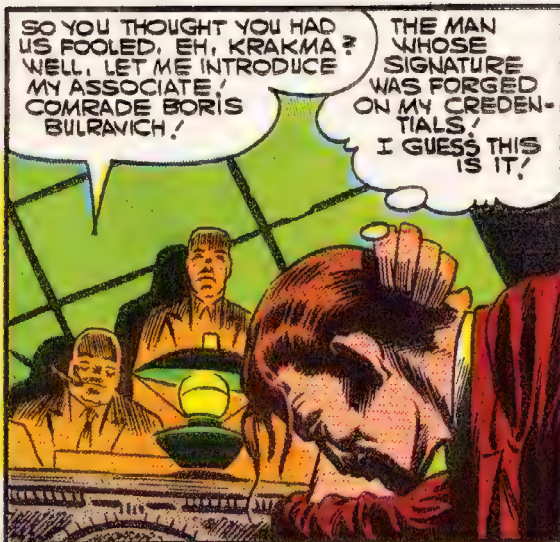
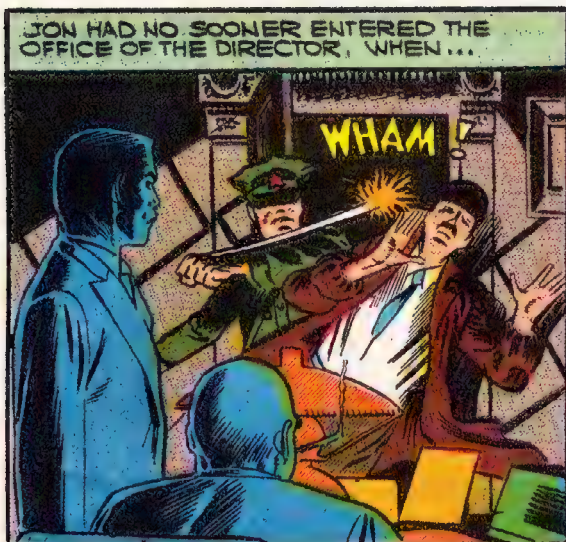
SO IT WENT UNTIL ONE MORNING MIKYA CALLED ON JON WHILE HE WORKED. /

COMRADE THE DIRECTOR WANTS YOU IN HIS OFFICE! PERHAPS TO GIVE YOU SOME SORT OF REWARD, COMRADE JON. /

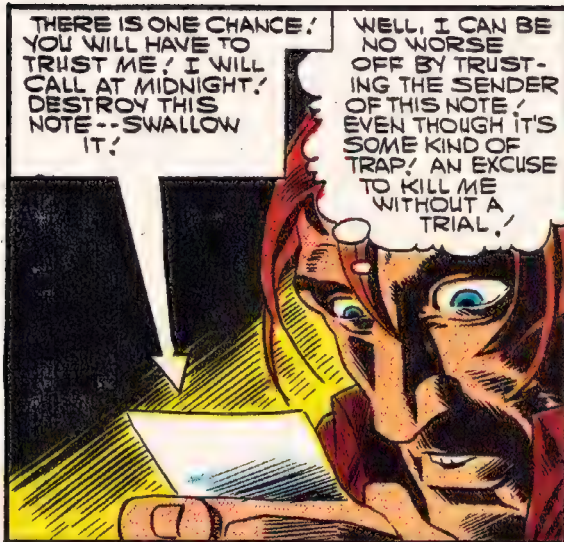
I WILL GO WITH YOU AT ONCE! /





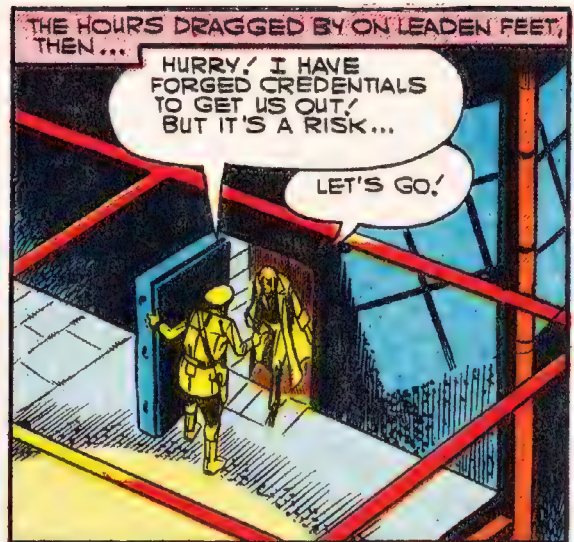






THERE IS ONE CHANCE! YOU WILL HAVE TO TRUST ME! I WILL CALL AT MIDNIGHT! DESTROY THIS NOTE--SWALLOW IT!

WELL, I CAN BE NO WORSE OFF BY TRUSTING THE SENDER OF THIS NOTE! EVEN THOUGH IT'S SOME KIND OF TRAP! AN EXCUSE TO KILL ME WITHOUT A TRIAL!



THE HOURS DRAGGED BY ON LEADEN FEET, THEN...

HURRY! I HAVE FORGED CREDENTIALS TO GET US OUT, BUT IT'S A RISK...

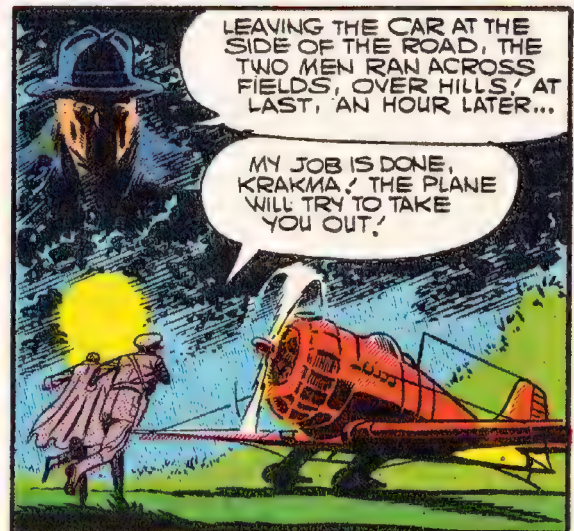
LET'S GO!



THE GUARD LED JON TO A WAITING CAR! THEY SPED OUT OF THE CITY, INTO THE OPEN COUNTRY...

MY CREDENTIALS HAVE SAVED US SO FAR, KRAKMA, BUT NOW WE LEAVE THE CAR AND ARE ON OUR OWN!

WHAT-  
EVER  
YOU  
SAY!



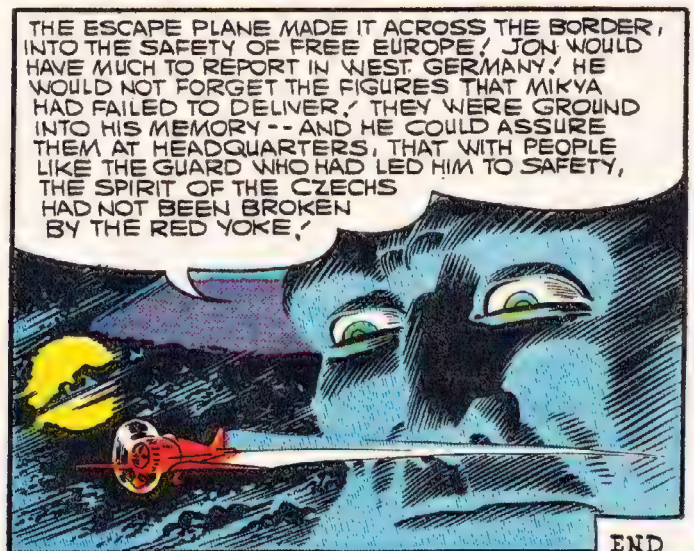
LEAVING THE CAR AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, THE TWO MEN RAN ACROSS FIELDS, OVER HILLS, AT LAST, AN HOUR LATER...

MY JOB IS DONE, KRAKMA! THE PLANE WILL TRY TO TAKE YOU OUT!



IT'S AN HONOR TO SHAKE THE HAND OF SO BRAVE A CZECH! YOU TAKE FANTASTIC CHANCES!

I'M A HUNTED MAN NOW! THEY WILL GET ME SOONER OR LATER! BUT I HAVE A LOT TO COMPLETE BEFORE THEY CATCH UP WITH ME! GOOD LUCK!



THE ESCAPE PLANE MADE IT ACROSS THE BORDER, INTO THE SAFETY OF FREE EUROPE! JON WOULD HAVE MUCH TO REPORT IN WEST GERMANY! HE WOULD NOT FORGET THE FIGURES THAT MIKYA HAD FAILED TO DELIVER! THEY WERE GROUND INTO HIS MEMORY -- AND HE COULD ASSURE THEM AT HEADQUARTERS, THAT WITH PEOPLE LIKE THE GUARD WHO HAD LED HIM TO SAFETY, THE SPIRIT OF THE CZECHS HAD NOT BEEN BROKEN BY THE RED YOKE!

END



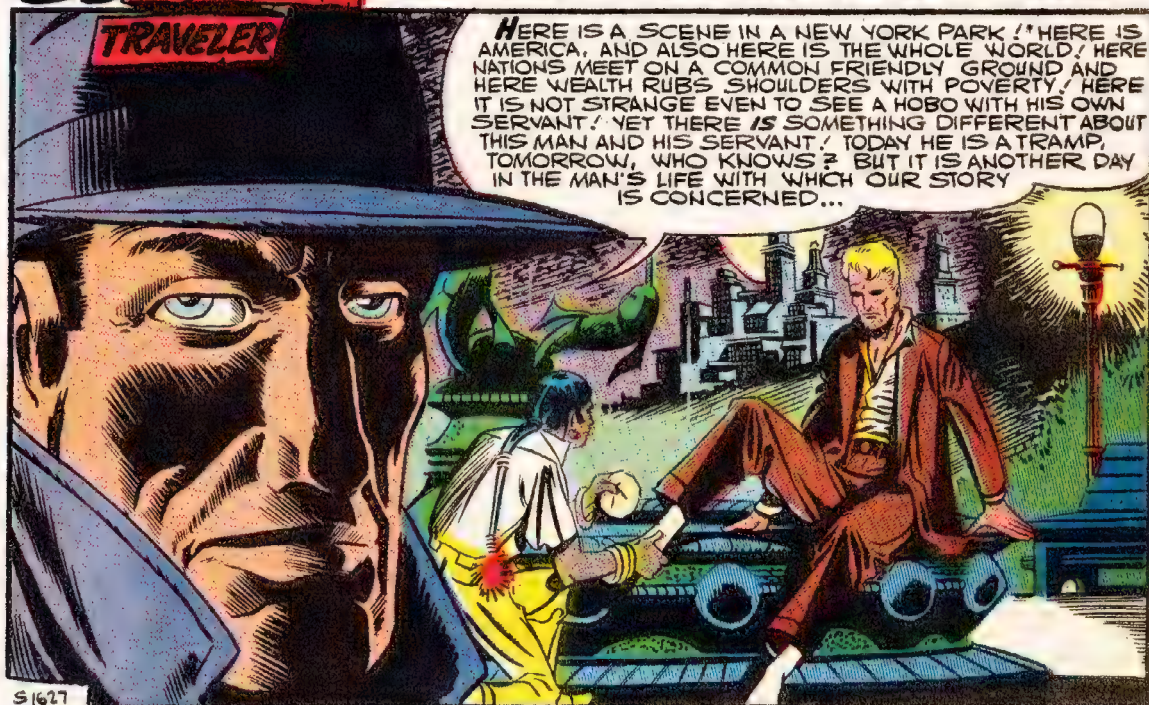
# Tales of the MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER



THIS SEAL OF APPROVAL APPEARS ONLY ON COMIC MAGAZINES WHICH HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY REVIEWED, PRIOR TO PUBLICATION, BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY, AND FOUND TO HAVE MET THE HIGH STANDARDS OF MORALITY AND GOOD TASTE REQUIRED BY THE CODE. THE CODE AUTHORITY OPERATES APART FROM ANY INDIVIDUAL PUBLISHER AND EXERCISES INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT WITH RESPECT TO CODE-COMPLIANCE. A COMIC MAGAZINE BEARING ITS SEAL IS YOUR ASSURANCE OF GOOD READING AND PICTORIAL MATTER.

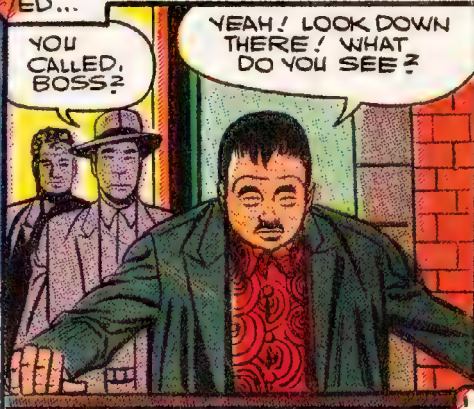
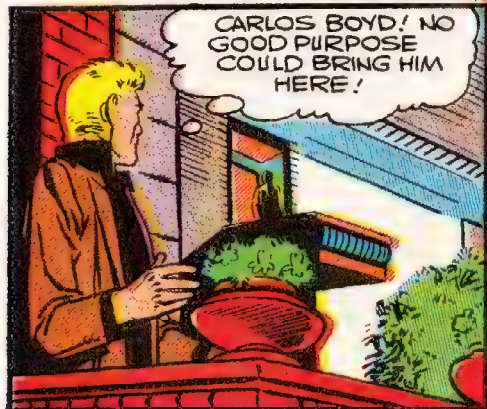
*Alfred P. Fago* Executive Editor

## TALES OF THE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER



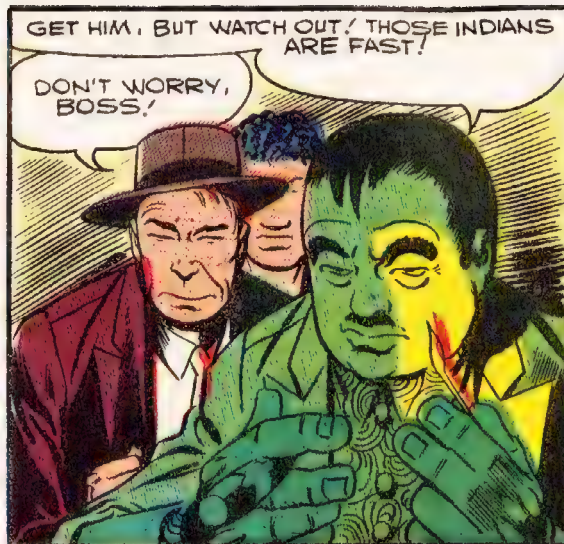
A YEAR AGO HANK LANGDON, EX-ARMY AIRFORCE PILOT, SOLDIER-OF-FORTUNE, WAS IN GUATEMALA CITY, WHERE HE HOPED TO LAND A JOB AS PILOT FOR AN INDEPENDENT AIRLINE! ONE NIGHT AT HIS HOTEL...

LANGDON HAD REFUSED TO RUN GUNS AND AMMUNITION FOR BOYD THREE YEARS BEFORE IN SOUTH AMERICA, WHERE BOYD WAS FOMENTING A REVOLUTION! BOYD HAD NEVER FORGIVEN HANK! LANGDON WATCHED...



S. Ditko

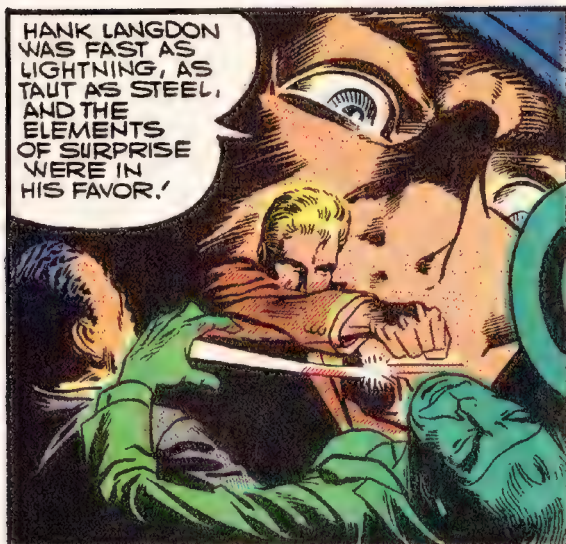




LANGDON HAD NOT HEARD ALL THAT BOYD HAD TOLD HIS MEN, BUT HE HAD GUESSED ENOUGH! HE HURRIED DOWN TO THE STREET...







HANK LANGDON WAS FAST AS LIGHTNING, AS TAUT AS STEEL, AND THE ELEMENTS OF SURPRISE WERE IN HIS FAVOR!



GRACIAS, GRACIAS, SENOR! IF LIN-TU EVER CAN PERFORM A SERVICE FOR THE SENOR....

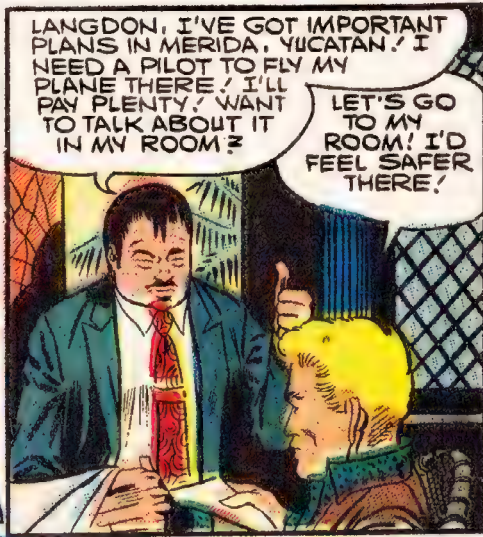
SKIP IT, SON-- BUT TELL ME WHY YOU'D BE CARRYING ALL THAT GOLD IN AN OPEN BASKET?



BUT IT EES MAYO'S GOLD! WHO WOULD DARE TO STEAL HIS GOLD, SENOR? I AM TO DELIVER IT TO MAYO'S AGENT!

MAYO, KING OF ALL INDIANS OF THIS COUNTRY, RULER OF THE JUNGLE AND THE FORBIDDEN LAND! WELL, YOU'D BETTER DELIVER IT FAST! I WON'T GUARANTEE TO BE ABLE TO HELP YOU NEXT TIME!

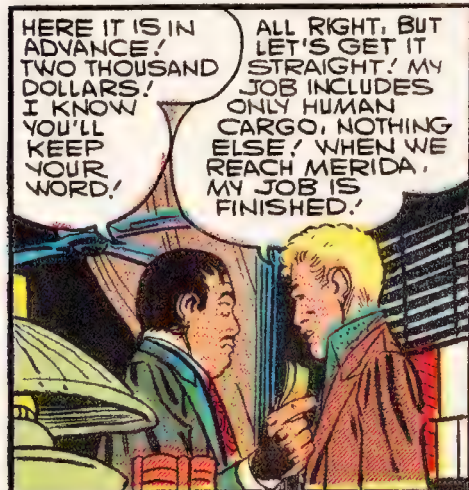
IF BOYD SUSPECTED HANK LANGDON HAD SPOILED HIS PLANS HE DIDN'T MENTION IT TO HANK! BUT THREE WEEKS LATER, HE APPROACHED HIM AT THE HOTEL...



LANGDON, I'VE GOT IMPORTANT PLANS IN MERIDA, YUCATAN! I NEED A PILOT TO FLY MY PLANE THERE! I'LL PAY PLENTY! WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT IN MY ROOM?

LET'S GO TO MY ROOM! I'D FEEL SAFER THERE!

BOYD SHOWED NO RESENTMENT, BUT WENT TO LANGDON'S ROOM.

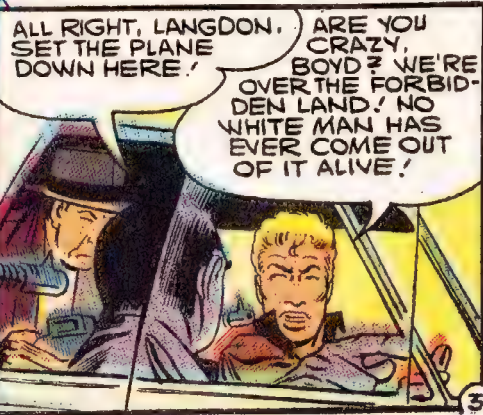


HERE IT IS IN ADVANCE! TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS! I KNOW YOU'LL KEEP YOUR WORD!

ALL RIGHT, BUT LET'S GET IT STRAIGHT! MY JOB INCLUDES ONLY HUMAN CARGO, NOTHING ELSE! WHEN WE REACH MERIDA, MY JOB IS FINISHED!



HANK'S FIRST TROUBLE CAME WHEN HE FOUND THREE MEN WERE TO ACCOMPANY BOYD! TWO OF THEM WERE THE ONES HE HAD PREVENTED FROM ROBBING LIN-TU! THEN, OVER A BROAD SPAN OF TERRITORY..



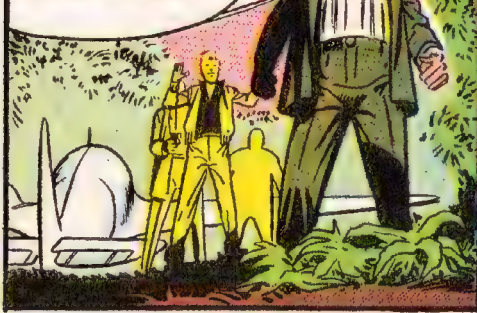
ALL RIGHT, LANGDON. SET THE PLANE DOWN HERE!

ARE YOU CRAZY, BOYD? WE'RE OVER THE FORBIDDEN LAND! NO WHITE MAN HAS EVER COME OUT OF IT ALIVE!



HANK COULD NOT ARGUE WITH BOYD! THE FAT MAN LAUGHED MIRTHLESSLY, ORDERED THE PLANE DOWN ONCE MORE...

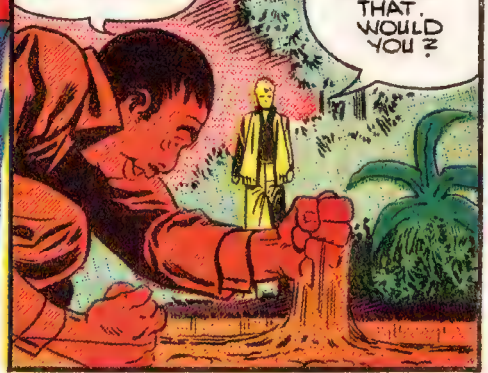
KEEP LANGDON COVERED AND FOLLOW ME! I HAVE SOME IDEAS ABOUT THIS PLACE!



CARLOS BOYD FOLLOWED A HARD-PAKED TRAIL FOR HALF AN HOUR! THEN ...

MAN, LOOK AT THAT! GOLD! MILLIONS IN GOLD! AND I'M GETTING IT OUT OF HERE!

YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO MAKE A BET ON THAT, WOULD YOU?



BOYD WADED INTO THE STREAM AND FILLED HIS ARMS WITH ALMOST PURE GOLD! THEN, AS HE TURNED TO LEAVE THE STREAM...

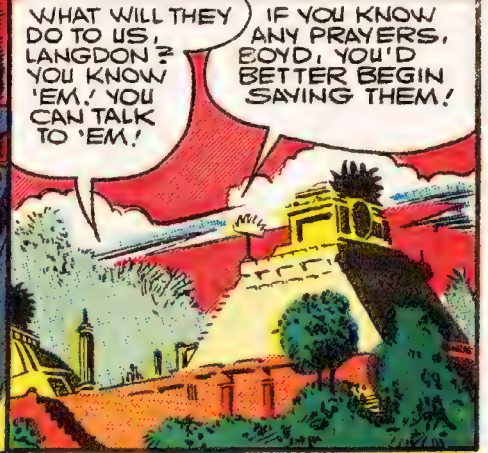
WHA... GET 'EM, YOU GUYS! GET 'EM! THEY'LL KILL US!



BUT RESISTANCE WAS USELESS! THERE WERE A THOUSAND INDIANS HOLDING THE PARTY CAPTIVE!

WHAT WILL THEY DO TO US, LANGDON? YOU KNOW 'EM! YOU CAN TALK TO 'EM!

IF YOU KNOW ANY PRAYERS, EYD, YOU'D BETTER BEGIN SAYING THEM!



A FEW MOMENTS LATER, THE CAPTIVES WERE INSIDE THE TEMPLE BEFORE A COLDLY FURIOUS MAYO...

HE WHO ENTERS THE FORBIDDEN LAND WITHOUT PERMISSION IS DOOMED! DEATH TO ALL OF YOU AT SUNRISE!

BUT... B... B...



NOT UNTIL LATE IN THE NIGHT DID BOYD AND HIS MEN DROP TO SLEEP FROM EXHAUSTION! HANK LANGDON HAD GONE TO SLEEP AT ONCE ONLY TO FEEL SOMEONE SHAKING HIM AND WHISPERING...

HUH? WHAT... IS... IT?

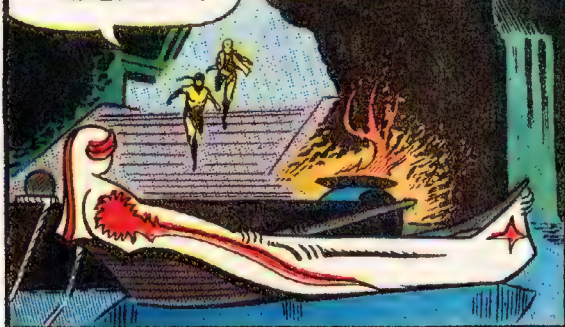
SENOR, SENOR, AWAKE QUIETLY! DO NOT ROUSE THE OTHERS!





LANGDON FOLLOWED LIN-TU WHO MOVED SWIFTLY, SOUNDLESSLY INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE TEMPLE'S CELLAR...

TWO OF THOSE WHO SLEEP ARE THE ONES WHO ATTACKED ME, SENOR! BUT YOU... I WELCOME THE CHANCE TO REPAY YOUR KINDNESS!



SOON THE CURRENT GREW SWIFT! LANGDON JUDGED THE SPEED OF THE CRAFT TO BE FIFTY OR MORE MILES PER HOUR! YET THERE WAS NO SKY ABOVE THEM...

WHAT IS THIS, LIN-TU? IT'S LIKE A CAVERN!

IT IS A HUNDRED TIMES SWIFTER THAN TRAVELING THROUGH THE JUNGLE, SENOR! IT IS AN UNDERGROUND RIVER! THAT IS WHY THERE ARE NO RIVERS IN THE JUNGLE! ALL ARE BENEATH THE GROUND!\*

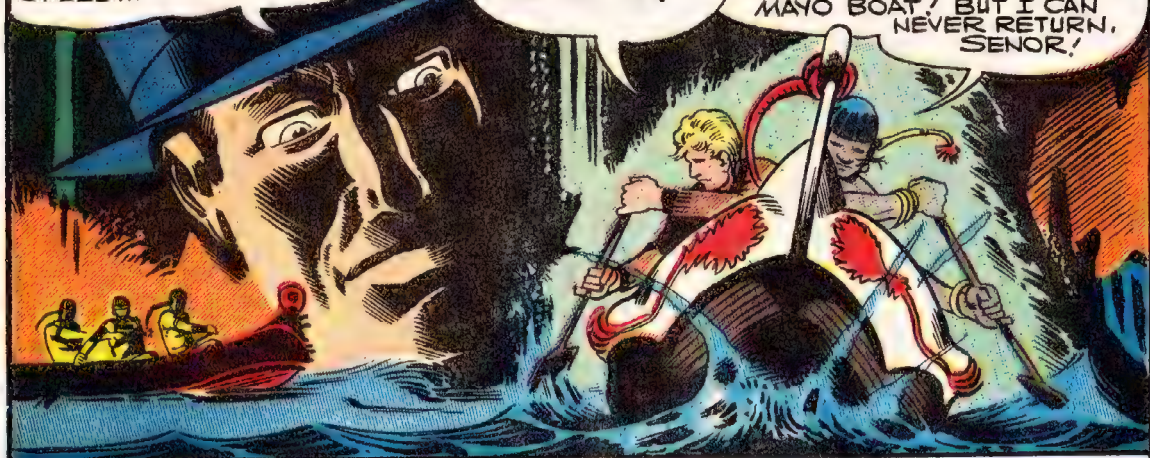


\*IN THE GUATEMALAN JUNGLE THERE ARE NO RIVERS ABOVE GROUND! ALL ARE BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE JUNGLE!

THE CANOE WENT ON FOR HOURS AT TREMENDOUS SPEED...

WON'T THESE OTHERS ATTACK US, LIN-TU?

WORD HAS NOT YET COME TO THEM FROM MAYO! AND THEY WILL NOT ATTACK A MAYO BOAT! BUT I CAN NEVER RETURN, SENOR!



TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER...

IF WE ARE FORTUNATE, SENOR, WE CAN ESCAPE! THERE ARE JUNGLES IN WHICH TO HIDE ACROSS THIS BAY!

IT'S THE BAY OF HONDURAS! IF WE CAN REACH HONDURAS REPUBLIC WE CAN GET A PLANE TO NEW YORK! I HAVE MONEY THAT BOYD PAID ME IN MY MONEY BELT! IT'LL PAY OUR FARE!



AND SO HANK LANGDON AND LIN-TU CAME TO NEW YORK! THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES FOR ONLY A FEW WEEKS, AND HANK'S MONEY IS GONE! THAT IS WHY YOU SEE A TRAMP WITH A DEVOTED SERVANT! BUT HANK IS A SOLDIER-OF-FORTUNE, AND SOON HIS FORTUNES MAY CHANGE!

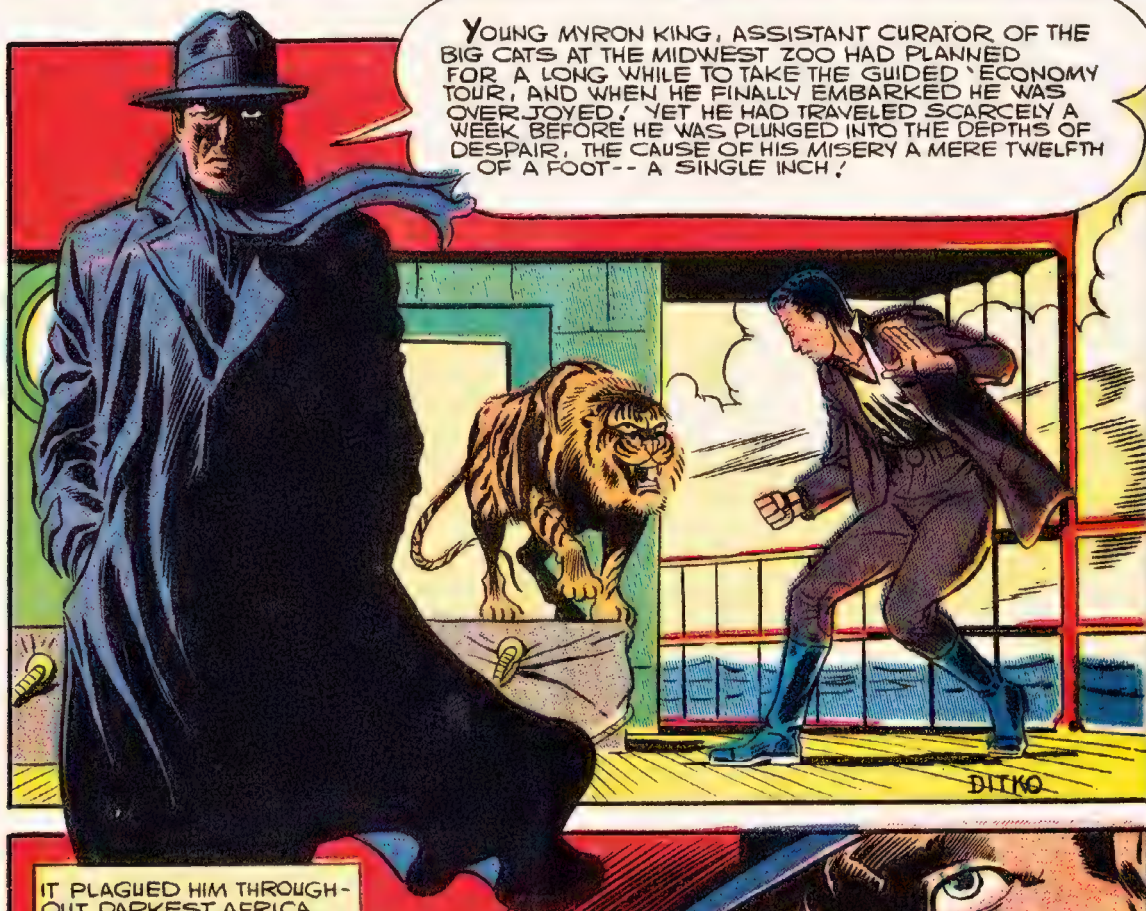


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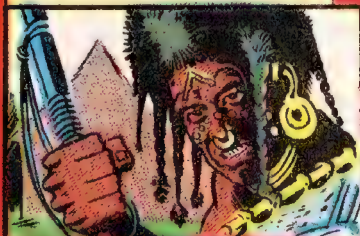


# TEST OF A MAN

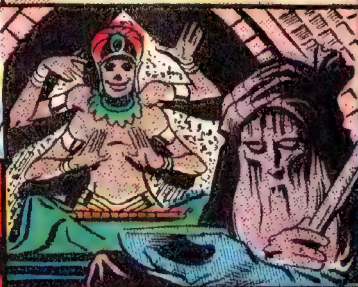
YOUNG MYRON KING, ASSISTANT CURATOR OF THE BIG CATS AT THE MIDWEST ZOO HAD PLANNED FOR A LONG WHILE TO TAKE THE GUIDED 'ECONOMY TOUR, AND WHEN HE FINALLY EMBARKED HE WAS OVERJOYED! YET HE HAD TRAVELED SCARCELY A WEEK BEFORE HE WAS PLUNGED INTO THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR, THE CAUSE OF HIS MISERY A MERE TWELFTH OF A FOOT-- A SINGLE INCH!



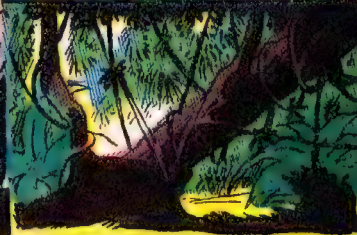
IT PLAGUED HIM THROUGH-  
OUT DARKEST AFRICA...



AND THROUGHOUT EXOTIC  
AND MYSTERIOUS INDIA...

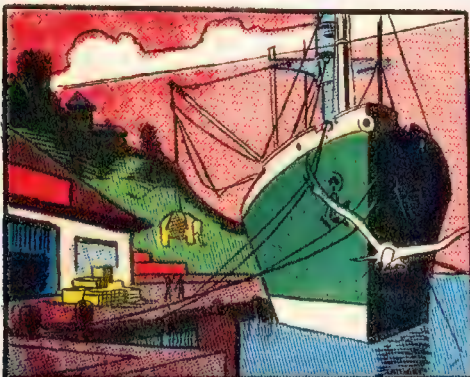


INTO THE STEAMING  
MALAYAN JUNGLE...

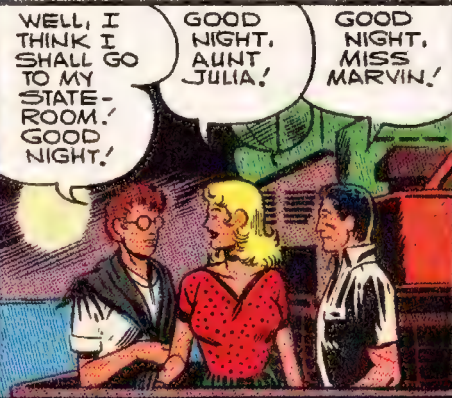




NOT EVEN THE FACT THAT HE WOULD SAIL HOME ON THE SAME SHIP IN WHICH JOHN VANCE, FAMOUS TRAPPER OF LIVE WILD ANIMALS, WOULD CARRY HIS JUNGLE CARGO TO THE STATES, RELIEVED HIM OF HIS BURDEN...



IT WAS THE ONE-HUNDREDTH NIGHT OF THE TOUR, AND ON NINETY-TWO PREVIOUS NIGHTS MUCH THE SAME CONVERSATION HAD TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN THE SAME PEOPLE IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD...



WELL, I THINK I SHALL GO TO MY STATE-ROOM! GOOD NIGHT!

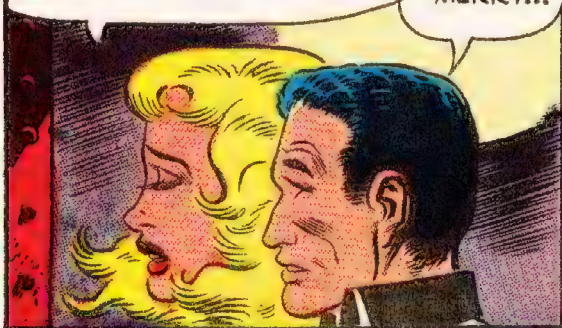
GOOD NIGHT, AUNT JULIA!

GOOD NIGHT, MISS MARVIN!

AND THE RESULTS WERE ALWAYS THE SAME...

OH, MYRON, I AM FOND OF YOU, BUT I SIMPLY CAN'T MARRY A MAN ONE INCH SHORTER THAN I AM; AND BESIDES, YOU SEEM SO SILLY GOING AROUND WITH THAT REVOLVER AT YOUR WAIST EACH TIME WE ARE AROUND WILD ANIMALS!

BUT, MERRY...



I CAN WEAR ELEVATOR SHOES, AND I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE THAT THE CARTRIDGES ARE ONLY BLANKS TO SCARE THE ANIMALS IF ANY SHOULD GET LOOSE. I DO KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT THEM, YOU KNOW!

OH, I'M SO SORRY, BUT IT'S NO USE! GOOD NIGHT!



MYRON KING WAS QUITE DISMAYED, KNOWING HE WOULD NOT SLEEP HE DECIDED TO VISIT JOHN VANCE, THE WILD ANIMAL COLLECTOR, WITH WHOM HE HAD BECOME FRIENDLY...



IT'S MYRON KING!

COME IN!

KNOCK! KNOCK!

I WON'T BE VERY GOOD COMPANY, KING. BAD ATTACK OF MALARIA. THE DOCTOR'S ORDERED ME TO BED. I'D BE TOO WEAK TO RISE, EVEN WITHOUT HIS ORDERS.

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT. I'D BETTER NOT STAY AND DISTURB YOU!

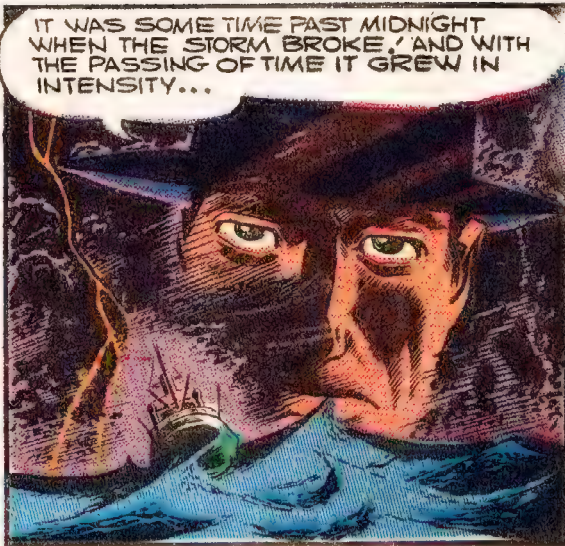




MYRON KING RETURNED TO HIS OWN STATEROOM AND LAY DOWN ON HIS BED. LETTING HIS OWN UNHAPPINESS WASH OVER HIM AS HE LAY STARING IN THE DARKNESS...



IT WAS SOME TIME PAST MIDNIGHT WHEN THE STORM BROKE, AND WITH THE PASSING OF TIME IT GREW IN INTENSITY...



THE STORM REACHED ITS GREATEST FURY SHORTLY BEFORE DAYLIGHT. A HUGE WAVE WASHED OVER THE FORWARD DECK, SWEEPING A CRATE AGAINST THE RAIL...



MYRON CAME ON DECK AS SOON AS THE STORM ABATED. IT WAS NOW DAYLIGHT. GOING TOWARD THE FORWARD DECK, HE SAW...



MYRON HEARD SOMEONE BEHIND HIM. HE TURNED TO FIND THE FIRST MATE...

I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING FAST! THIS PROWLER CAN CAUSE PLENTY OF TROUBLE!



SHOOT THE BEAST! QUICK, BEFORE HE KILLS SOMEONE!

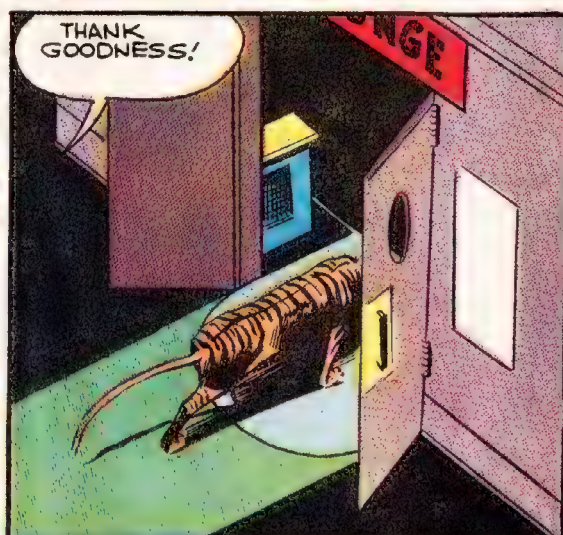
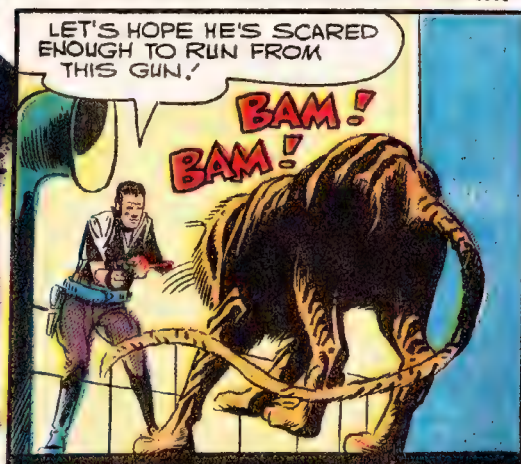
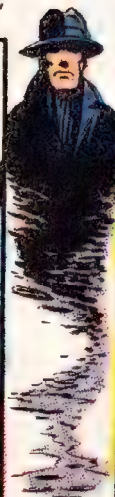
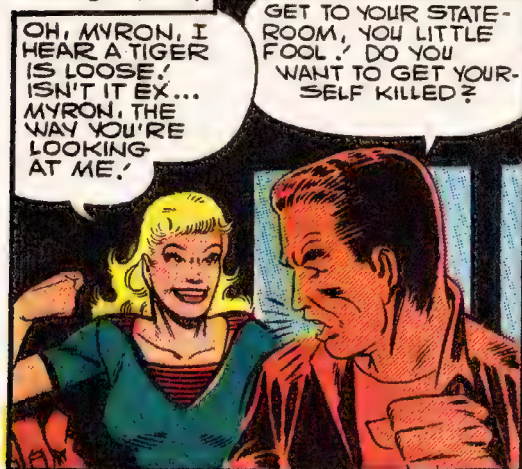
ORDER EVERYONE TO HIS STATEROOM. CLEAR THE DECKS UNTIL I TELL YOU IT'S SAFE!



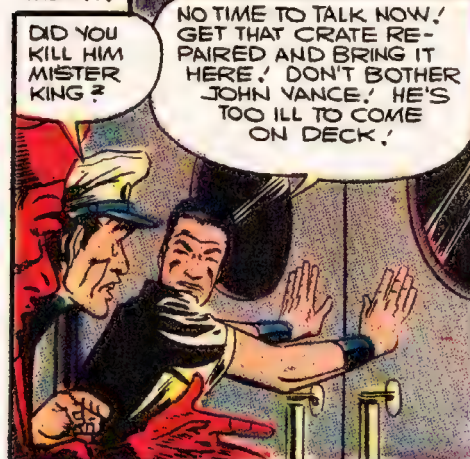


HE WAS ABOUT TO GO AFTER THE BEAST, WHEN HE SAW MERRY RUNNING TOWARD HIM...

WHEN HE HAD MADE SURE THE DECKS HAD BEEN CLEARED, MYRON KING APPROACHED THE SNARLING TIGER...



AS SOON AS THE BEAST WAS INSIDE THE LOUNGE, MYRON KING SLAMMED THE DOOR SHUT AND CALLED FOR THE MEN...

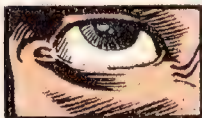


WITHIN AN HOUR THE CRATE HAD BEEN REPAIRED AND STRENGTHENED. MYRON KING ORDERED IT OPENED AND PLACED BEFORE THE LOUNGE DOORWAY...





FORCING THE LOOPED END OF THE ROPE INTO THE CAGE, MYRON KING ENTERED THE LOUNGE THROUGH A WINDOW! AS HE LIFTED THE LOOPED END OF ROPE FROM INSIDE THE CAGE THE NOW FRIGHTENED TIGER CROUCHED FOR THE SPRING...

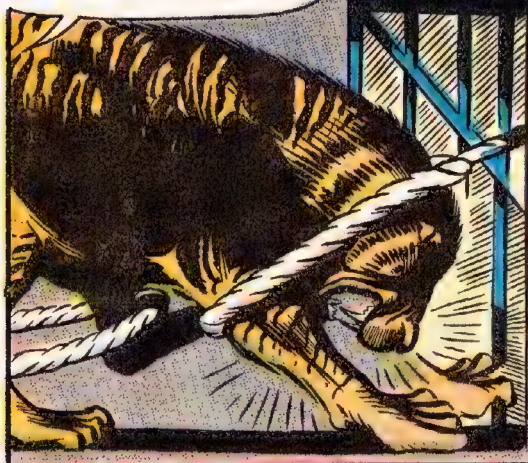


PULL THAT ROPE WHEN I GIVE THE WORD!



**PULL THE ROPE!  
PULL! PULL!**

KEEP PULLING! I'LL GET HIS HIND LEGS!



GOOD! HE'S IN! SLIDE THE CAGE DOOR SHUT AND WE'LL HAVE HIM!



MYRON KING CUT THE ROPES THAT HELD THE CAGED ANIMAL! THEN A SHIP'S CRANE WAS SWING OVER THE CAGE AND A NET TO CARRY THE CRATE PLACED ABOUT THE CAGE!



FROM NOW ON I'D ADVISE YOU TO LASH THAT CRATE TO THE RAIL!

I WILL SEE TO IT, MR. KING! I NEVER EXPECTED YOU TO TAKE THAT ANIMAL ALIVE! I THOUGHT YOU'D SHOOT HIM!

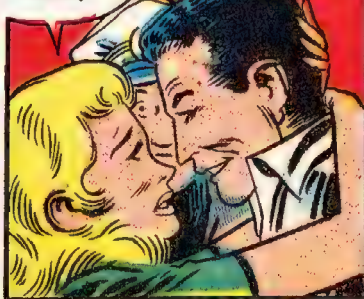
OH, MYRON! MYRON!



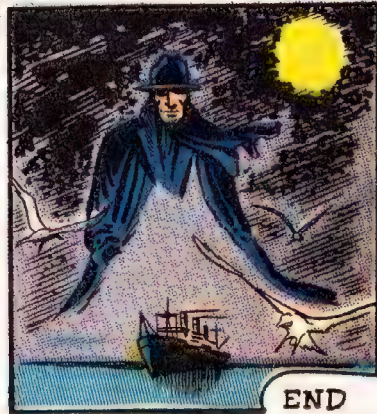
OH, MYRON! HOW BRAVE YOU ARE! AND TO GO AFTER THAT TERRIBLE ANIMAL WITH ONLY BLANKS IN YOUR GUN!

BLANKS? DID THE LADY SAY BLANKS?

OH IT WAS NOTHING, I... MERRY. DO YOU MEAN...



YES, MERRY MARVIN DID MEAN... THAT HEIGHT DID NOT MATTER ANY MORE! IN FACT MYRON KING SEEMED TO TOWER ABOVE HER AS HE TOOK HER IN HIS ARMS!

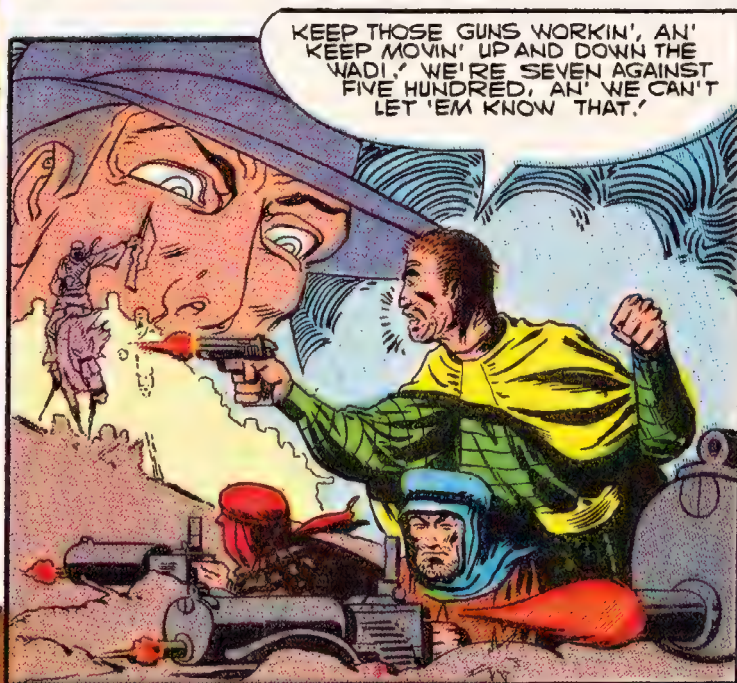
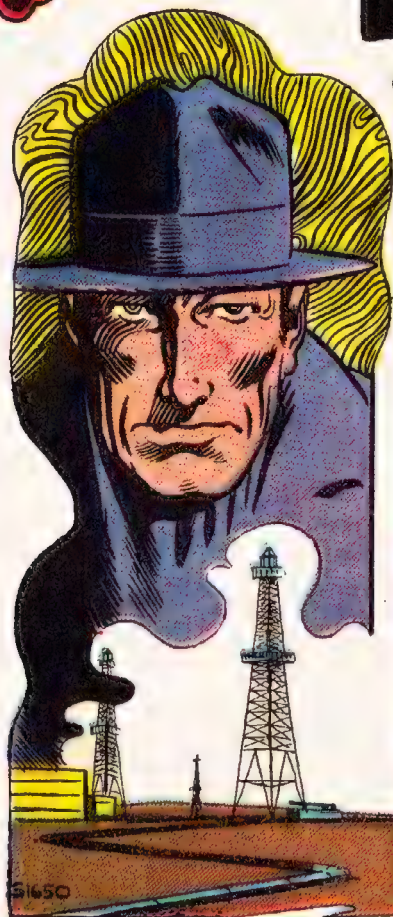


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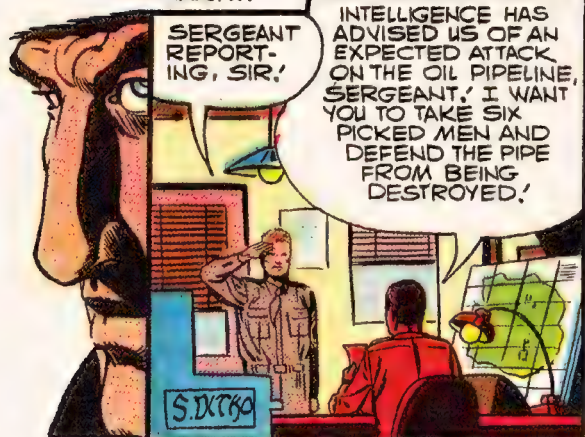


# OPERATION BLACKSNAKE

**O**PERATION BLACKSNAKE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ANY CRAWLING CREATURE, BUT WITH A THOUSAND MILES OF BLACK PIPE STRETCHING OVER THE DESERT. AND IT HAD TO DO WITH SERGEANT BART ARNOLD, WHO WAS KNOWN BETTER AS SARGE BY THE MEN WHO LOVED --AND SOMETIMES HATED-- THE TOUGH, HARD-BITTEN CAREER MAN...



THE SARGE WAS USED TO TOUGH ASSIGNMENTS, BUT NOT EVEN HE EXPECTED THE ORDER THAT WAS TO COME FROM COLONEL GEORGE HART...



SERGEANT REPORTING, SIR!

INTELLIGENCE HAS ADVISED US OF AN EXPECTED ATTACK ON THE OIL PIPELINE, SERGEANT. I WANT YOU TO TAKE SIX PICKED MEN AND DEFEND THE PIPE FROM BEING DESTROYED.

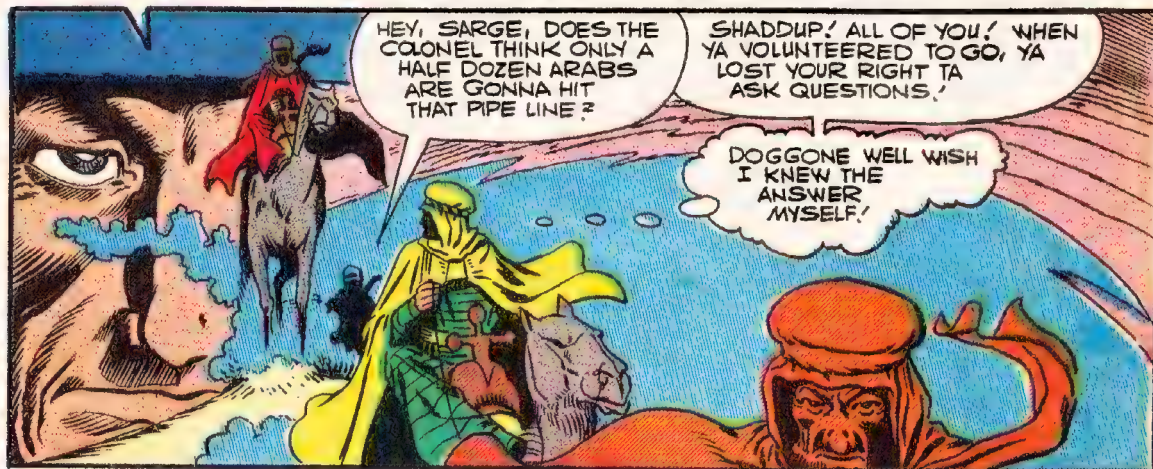
YOU SAID SIX MEN, SIR?

SIX MEN, THAT'S RIGHT! YOU'LL HAVE A TRUSTED ARAB GUIDE TO LEAD YOU TO THE PLACE! YOU WILL GO BY CAMEL CARAVAN, DISGUISED AS ARABS! YOU'LL TAKE PLENTY OF AMMUNITION AND MACHINE GUNS, AND FOOD ENOUGH FOR THREE DAYS! NONE OF YOU MAY COME BACK!





SARGE KNEW THE ARMY WAS IN THE DESERT WITH PERMISSION OF THE ARAB RULER, TO GUARANTEE DELIVERY OF THE OIL CONTRACTED FOR BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. BUT THE QUESTIONS OF HIS SIX PICKED MEN ANNOYED HIM...

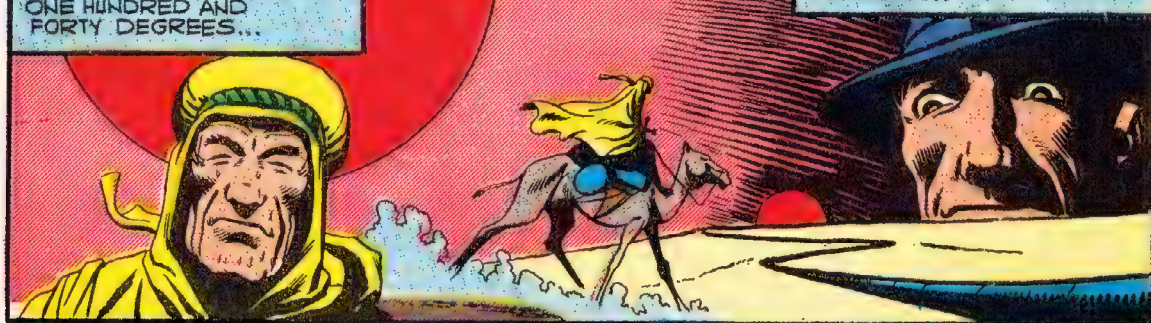


IT WAS A SLOW TEDIOUS JOURNEY OVER THE BLAZING SANDS. THERE WAS THE SWEAT OF MEN AND THE SMELL OF CAMELS, AND THE DRONE OF THE ARAB GUIDE URGING THE BEASTS ON...

FROM TEN IN THE MORNING UNTIL THREE IN THE AFTER-NOON ALL ACTIVITY CEASED AND EACH MAN DREW HIS BURNOOSE OVER HIM AGAINST A SUN THAT BURNED TO A TEMPERATURE OF ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY DEGREES...

IN THE LATE AFTERNOON THEY STARTED ONCE MORE ON THEIR JOURNEY, HURRYING THEN AS FAST AS POSSIBLE...

THEN, WHEN IT WAS ALMOST DARK, THE ARAB GUIDE POINTED AHEAD. THE LONG BLACK SNAKE THAT WAS THE PIPELINE CRAWLED ENDLESSLY ACROSS THE SANDS...



WHEN THEY HAD MADE CAMP, THE ARAB GUIDE STARTED BACK.

WHY, ALONG A THOUSAND MILES OF PIPE, DO THEY LEAVE US HERE? THERE'S NO TIME TO THINK OF THAT, GOTTA SET UP THE GUNS.

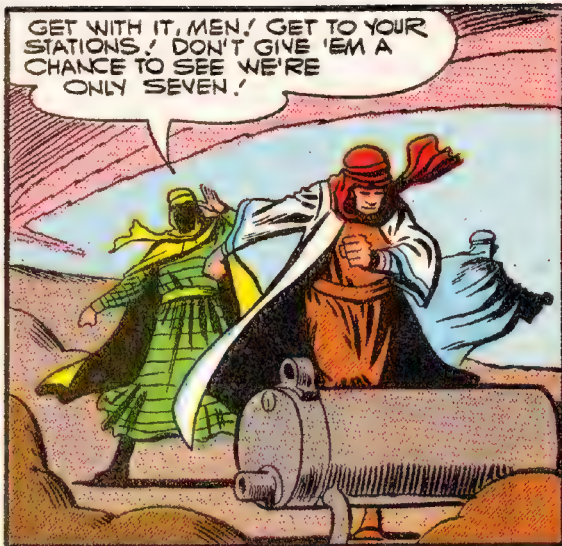
THE MEN WERE WEARY AFTER SETTING UP THEIR GUNS IN THE NEARBY WADI, AND THEY SLEPT SOUNDLY. BUT SARGE'S MIND KEPT WANDERING, QUESTIONING. BEFORE DAWN HE WAS UP.

YEAH... I SEE! I THINK I SEE THE REA... HUH?

SARGE! SARGE! LOOK, THEY'RE COMIN'!



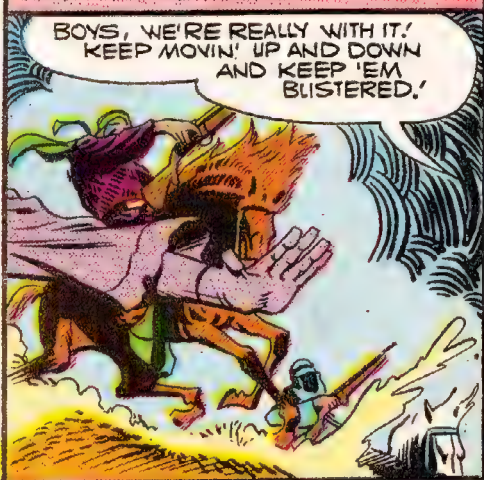




THE ARABS CAME! WILD MEN LED BY THE FIERCE SHEIK ALI RHENGIS WHO KEPT HIS LEADERSHIP OF FIVE HUNDRED MEN BY SHEER POWER OF HIS RUTHLESS COURAGE ...



ALL THAT MORNING THE SMALL BAND HELD OFF THE HORDE ...

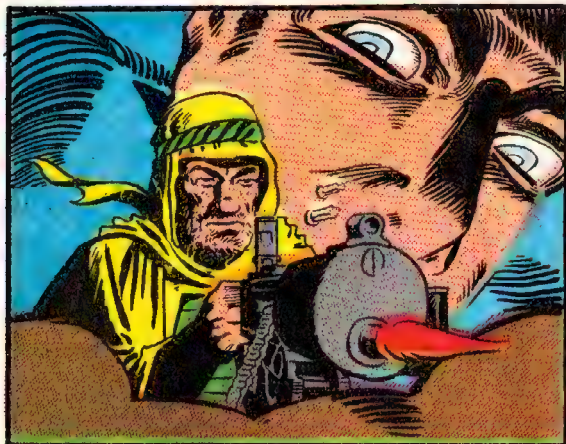


BUT NOT EVEN THE FIERCE ARAB BAND COULD FIGHT IN MIDDAY! IT WAS THEN THAT SARGE TOOK CARE OF HIS WEARY AND WOUNDED MEN ...





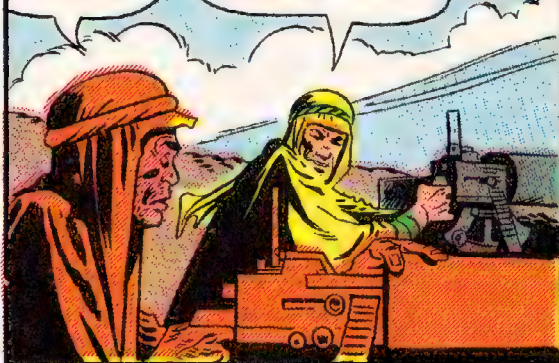
THE FIGHT WENT ON UNTIL DARKNESS CAME!  
THEN WITH THE MORNING IT RESUMED AGAIN!  
NOW SARGE HAD LOST TWO MEN! BUT THE  
ARABS HAD LOST A HUNDRED...



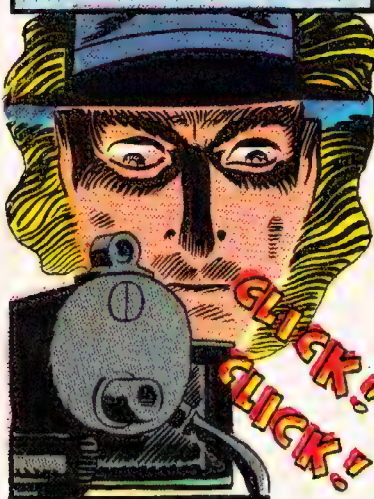
BY THE END OF THE NEXT DAY ...

THIS IS  
MY LAST  
ROUND,  
SARGE!  
THEN IT'S  
ALL OVER!

WE'LL GIVE 'EM ALL WE GOT!  
THEN WE'LL USE OUR FISTS!  
WHEN WE'RE OUTA ACTION  
THEY'LL KNOW WE WENT  
DOWN SPITTIN' ON  
OUR HANDS!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

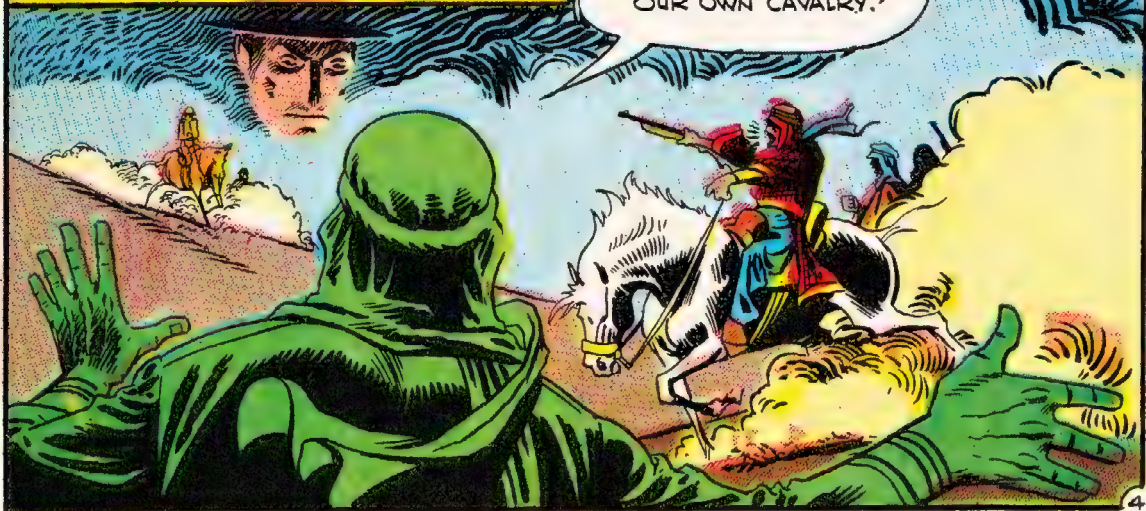


WITH A ROAR, THE WILD ALI RHENGIS LED HIS CHARGE  
TOWARD THE NOW SILENCED 'WADI ...

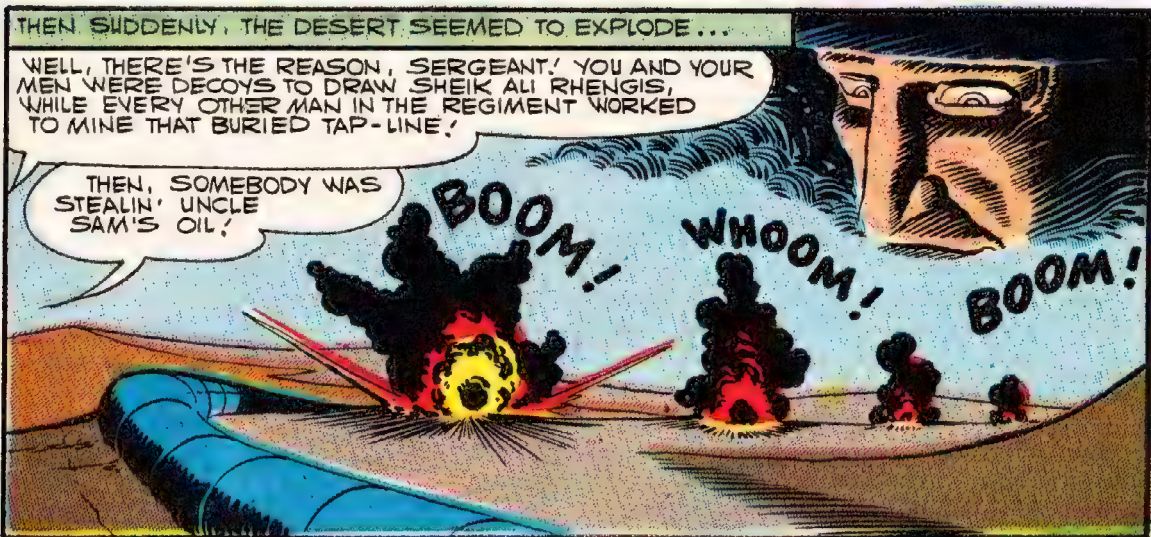
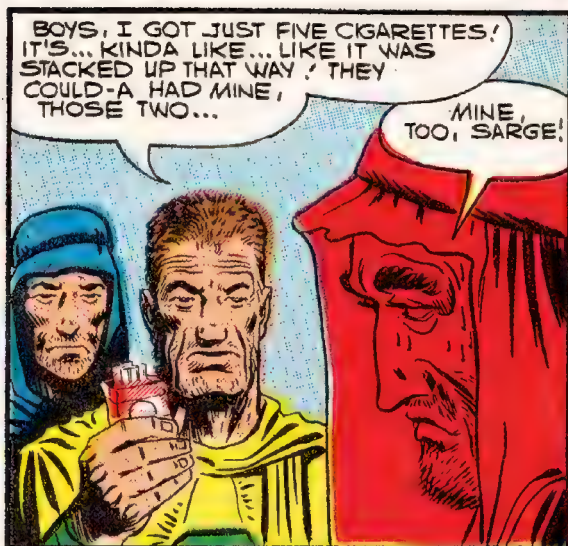


THEN SUDDENLY, AS IF FROM NOWHERE ...

LOOK, SARGE, LOOK!  
OUR OWN CAVALRY!









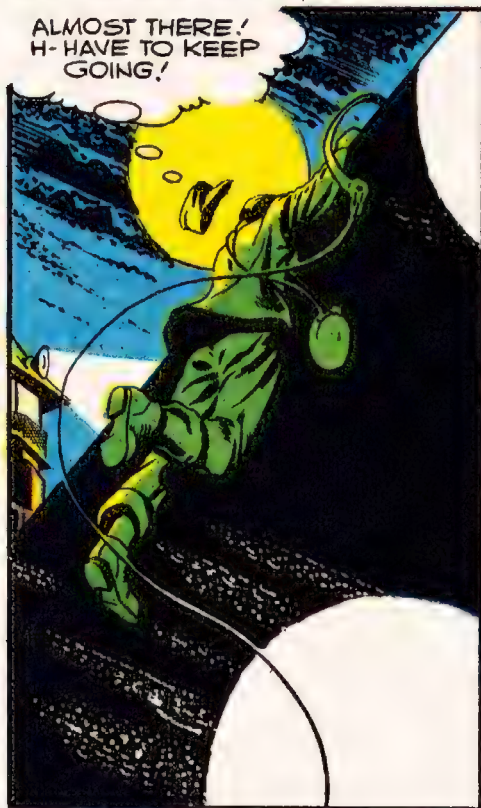
# THE MIRAGE

WITH THE SIRENS WAILING LIKE MADDENED BANSHEES, AND THE SEARCHLIGHT SCOOPING WHITE FUNNELS OUT OF THE DARKNESS, THREATENING EVERY MOMENT TO PINPOINT HIM, THE MAN RAN TOWARD THE HIGH PRISON WALL...



S 1681

ALMOST THERE!  
H-HAVE TO KEEP  
GOING!



WHEN HE REACHED THE TOP, ALL HE COULD DO WAS LIE THERE QUIETLY, HIS MOUTH SAGGING, GASPING LIKE A FISH OUT OF WATER...

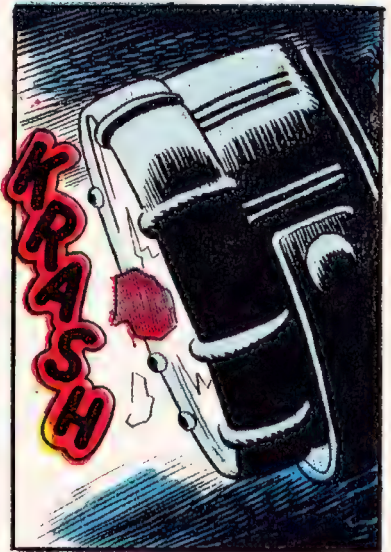




...BUT SUDDENLY...



DESPERATE  
LUCK GUIDED  
HIS HAND  
AT THAT MO-  
MENT TO A  
PIECE OF  
LOOSE  
MASONRY...



AND NOW, CLOAKED BY DARKNESS  
AGAIN...

I'M OVER!  
I MADE  
IT!

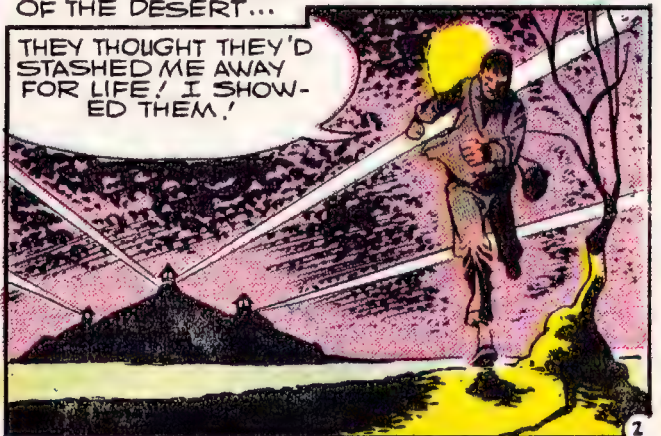


THEY'LL NEVER  
CATCH ME!  
NEVER! I'M  
DIFFERENT!



HE SMILED CRUELLY AS HE JOGGED THROUGH  
THE NIGHT! HE HAD JUST DONE WHAT NO MAN  
HAD EVER DONE BEFORE! HE HAD BROKEN  
OUT OF THE GRIM PILE OF STONES THAT WAS  
A MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON ON THE EDGE  
OF THE DESERT...

THEY THOUGHT THEY'D  
STASHED ME AWAY  
FOR LIFE! I SHOW-  
ED THEM!





AND I'LL KEEP SHOWING THEM! ONCE I CROSS THIS DESERT, I'LL CONTACT MY OLD GANG! THEN I'LL START ROLLING AGAIN... AND THEY'LL ALL WISH THEY WERE NEVER BORN!



ANOTHER MAN WOULD HAVE TREMBLED AT THE PROSPECT OF THAT VAST LIMITLESS STRETCH OF SAND! BUT HE ONLY SMILED...

NOBODY'S CROSSED YOU BEFORE...



... BUT I'M DIFFERENT! I PULLED A FIRST BY BREAKING OUT TO-NIGHT --AND I'LL PULL ANOTHER FIRST BY CROSSING YOU NOW!



THE STARS IN THE CURVING SKY SEEMED TO STARE UNBLINKINGLY! THE ONLY SOUND THAT COULD BE HEARD WAS THE HISS OF SAND UNDERFOOT AS THE MAN CONFIDENTLY STARTED HIS LONELY TREK...



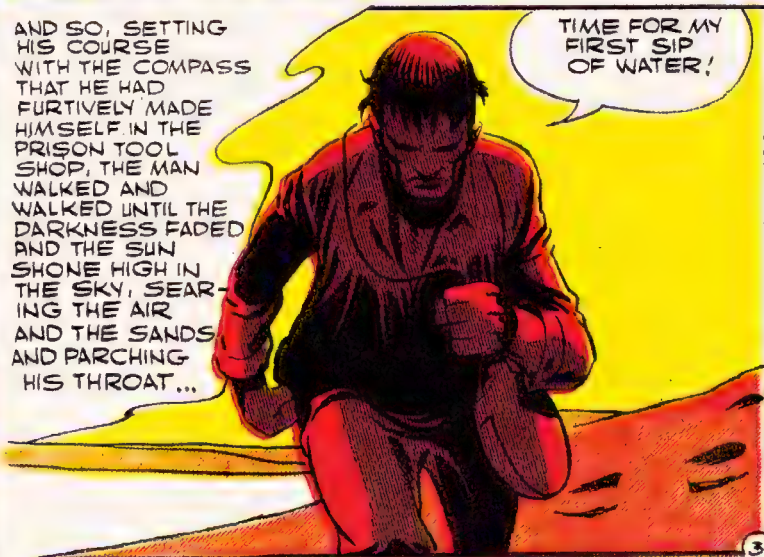
HE HAD CONCENTRATED TABLETS THAT HE HAD STOLEN FROM THE PRISON DISPENSARY! WATER? HE HAD A SINGLE CANTEEN, HE WAS CERTAIN THAT ...

ONE'S ENOUGH!

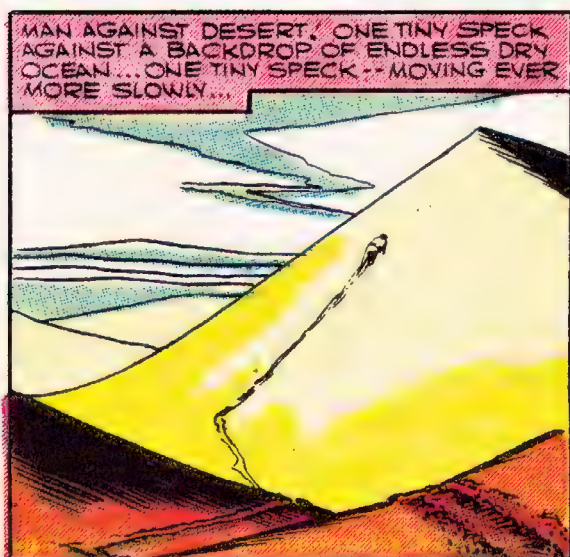


AND SO, SETTING HIS COURSE WITH THE COMPASS THAT HE HAD FURTIVELY MADE HIMSELF IN THE PRISON TOOL SHOP, THE MAN WALKED AND WALKED UNTIL THE DARKNESS FADED AND THE SUN SHONE HIGH IN THE SKY, SEARING THE AIR AND THE SANDS AND PARCHING HIS THROAT...

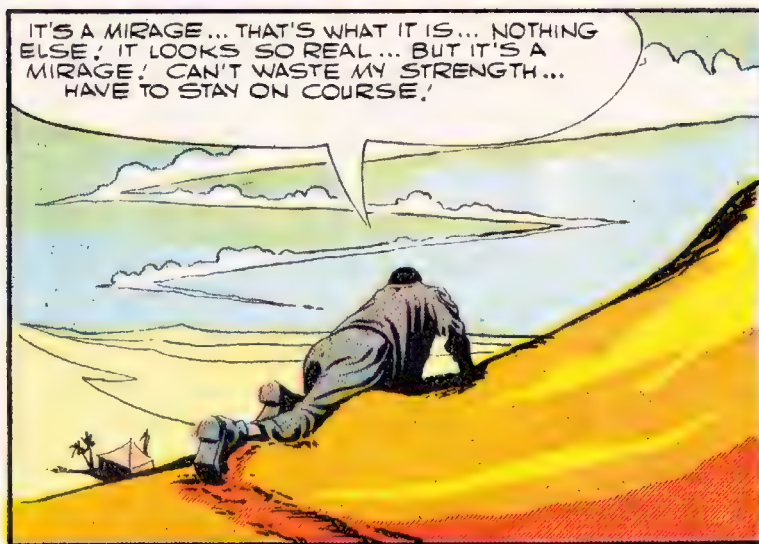
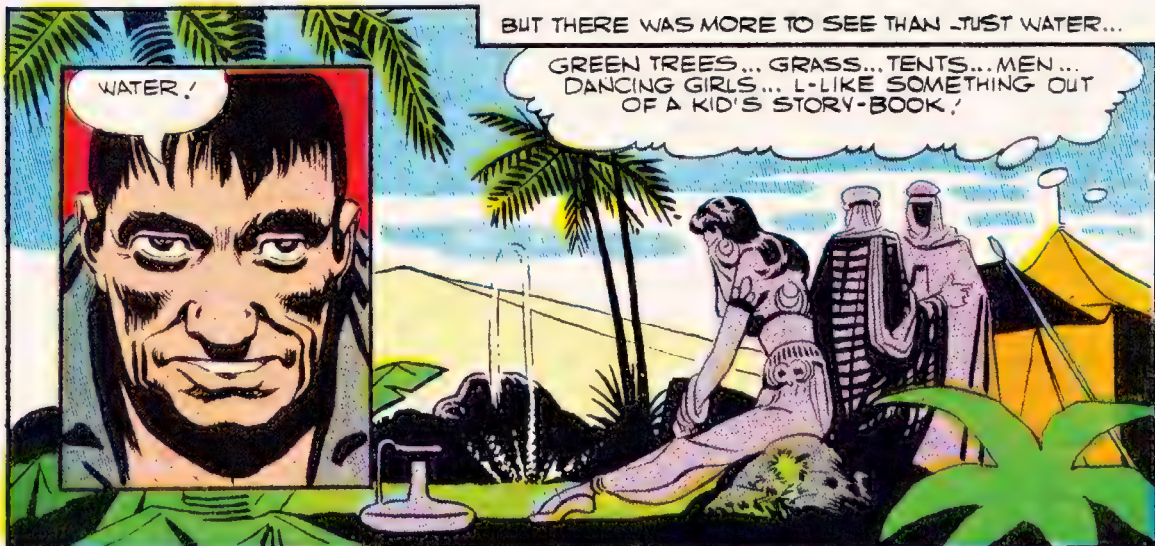
TIME FOR MY FIRST SIP OF WATER!



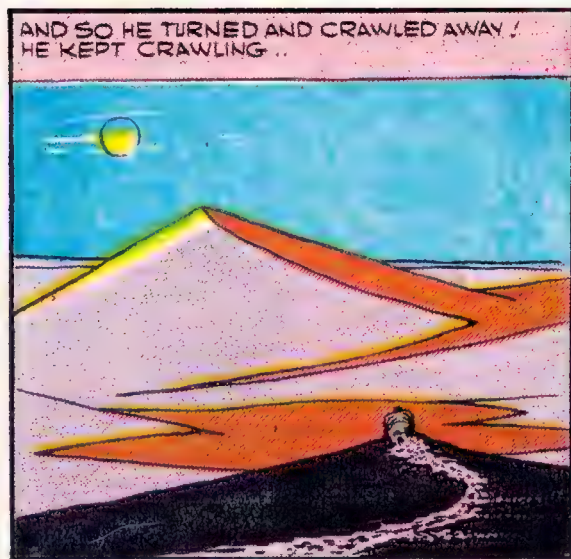
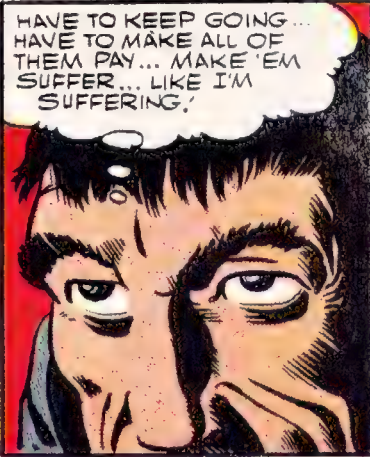




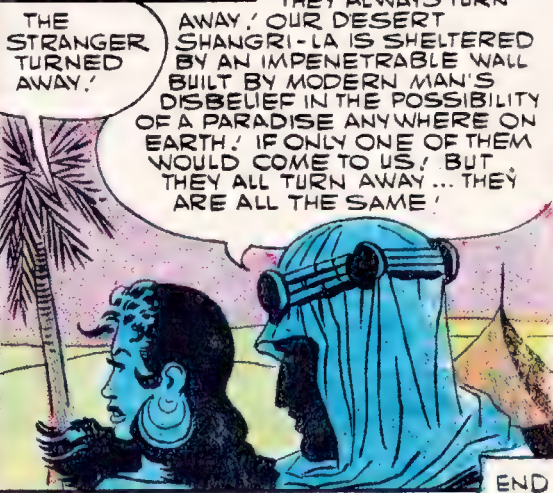




NO OTHER MAN WOULD'VE HAD THE WILLPOWER TO TURN AWAY, HE WAS DIFFERENT...



AND THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE THE DESERT KNEW...

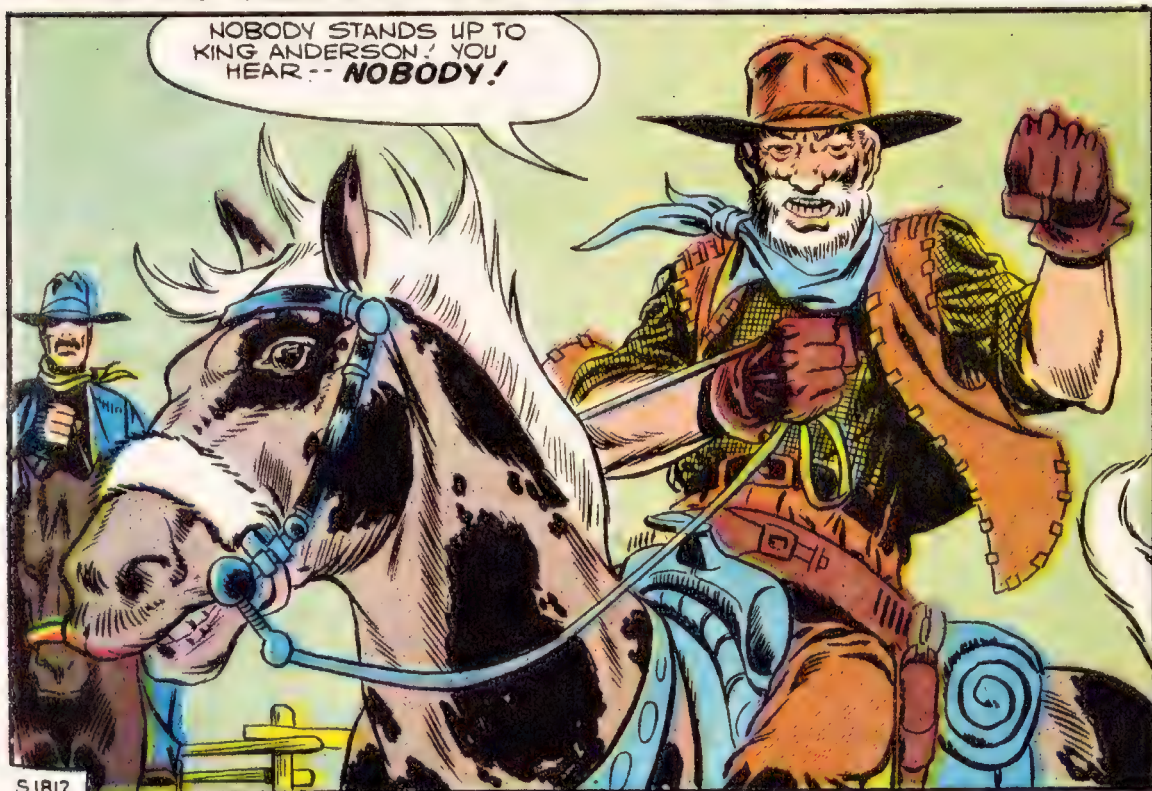


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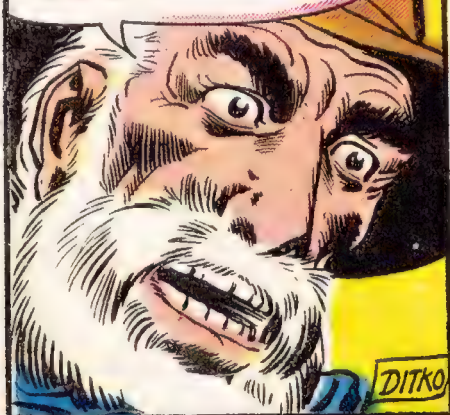
# THE ONLY ONE

KING ANDERSON, HE WAS CALLED... AND IN THE WIDE VALLEY THAT HE KEPT FOR HIMSELF AND RULED WITH AN IRON HAND, HE WAS REALLY KING....



S 1812

THIS LAND'S ALL MINE... I NEED EVERY LAST INCH OF IT FOR GRAZIN' MY CATTLE! NO HOMESTEADER'S GOIN' TO SETTLE DOWN HERE! NOW GIT!



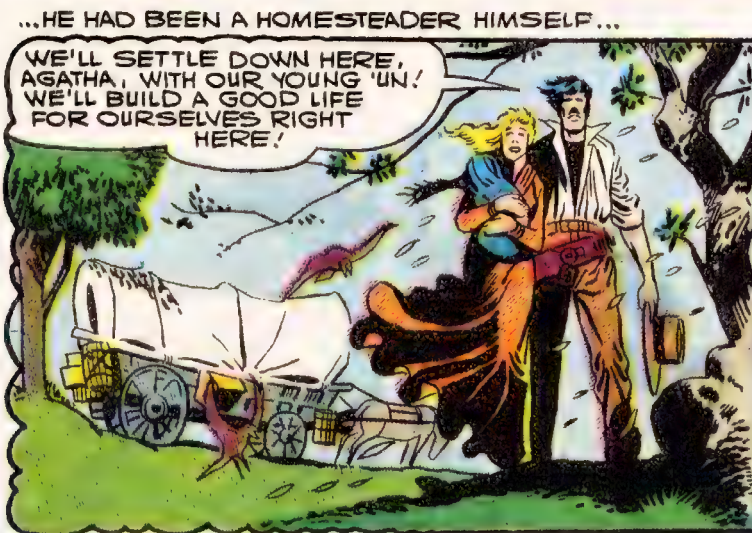
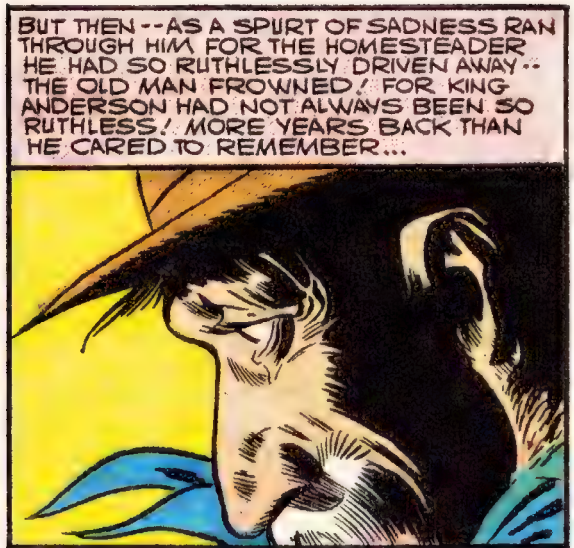
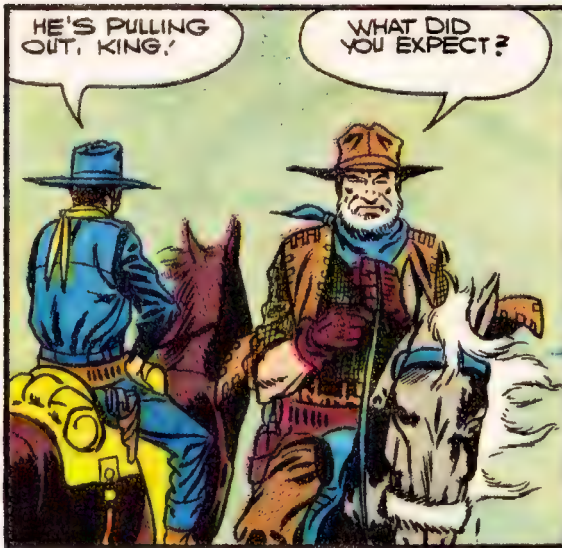
FOR A LONG MOMENT THE HOMESTEADER STOOD, AND THE ACHE TO FIGHT BACK WAS STRONG WITHIN HIM. BUT THEN...

WHAT'S THE USE? I WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST ALL OF THEM!

HMPF!

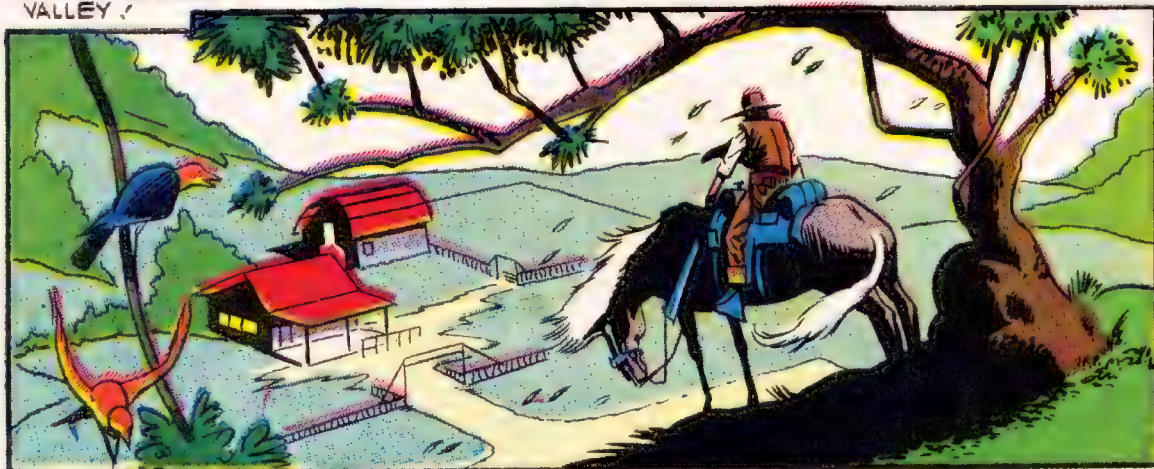








ALL HIS LOVE AND WARMTH FOR MANKIND HAD DRAINED OUT OF HIM THAT DAY... DRAIN-  
ED OUT AND BEEN REPLACED BY A BITTER RUTHLESSNESS! HE HAD LIVED ON,  
HATING EVERYBODY, AND HE HAD BUILT FOR HIMSELF THIS 'KINGDOM' IN THE  
VALLEY!



...AND NOW HE WAS OLD  
AND STILL FULL OF HATE!  
BUT FROM TIME TO TIME  
HE FELT SPURTS OF SAD-  
NESS FOR THOSE HE  
DROVE AWAY ...



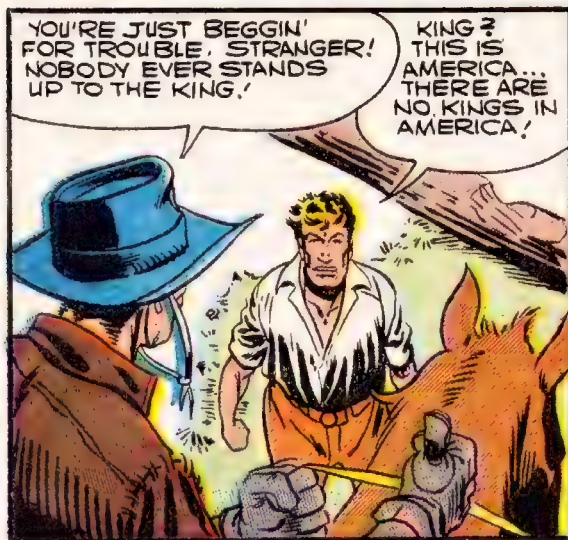
ANOTHER YEAR PASSED  
AND KING ANDERSON'S  
HOLDINGS WERE STILL  
EXPANDING! BUT THEN  
ONE DAY ...



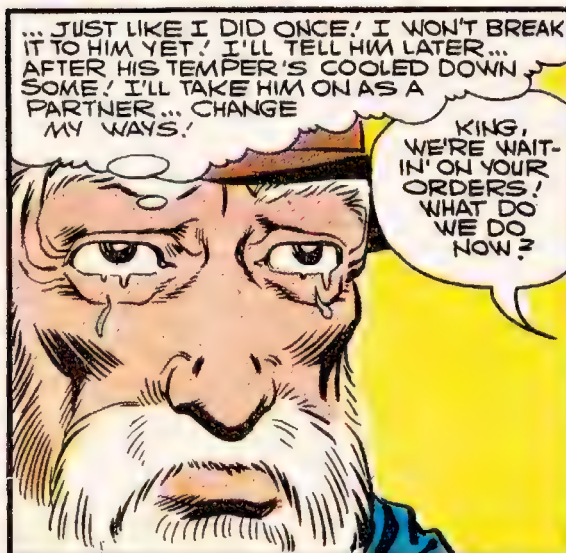
...ANOTHER HOMESTEADER  
JUST RODE IN! HE'S  
SETTIN' UP IN  
THE VALLEY!















UNUSUAL TALES

Extraordinary Stories Never Before Told



No 6

# UNUSUAL TALES

10¢

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION





UNUSUAL TALES

Extraordinary Stories Never Before Told



# UNUSUAL TALES

No 7

10¢

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



ON THE BENCH  
THE ARTIST  
THE MAN  
MAN WHO PAINTED  
ON THIN AIR



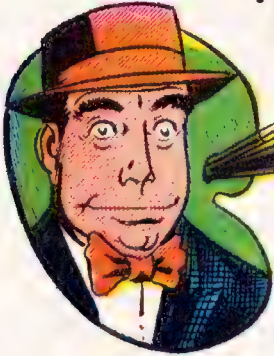
# UNUSUAL TALES



THIS SEAL OF APPROVAL APPEARS ONLY ON COMIC MAGAZINES WHICH HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY REVIEWED, PRIOR TO PUBLICATION, BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY, AND FOUND TO HAVE MET THE HIGH STANDARDS OF MORALITY AND GOOD TASTE REQUIRED BY THE CODE. THE CODE AUTHORITY OPERATES APART FROM ANY INDIVIDUAL PUBLISHER AND EXERCISES INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT WITH RESPECT TO CODE-COMPLIANCE. A COMIC MAGAZINE BEARING ITS SEAL IS YOUR ASSURANCE OF GOOD READING AND PICTORIAL MATTER.

*Alfred P. Jones* Executive Editor

THERE ISN'T A PROMOTER ALIVE WHO WOULDN'T GIVE HIS EYETOOTH FOR AN ACT LIKE THAT ONE! IT WAS THE MOST... IT WAS A SUPER-SPECTACULAR SMASH SENSATION! AND YOURS TRULY HAD IT SIGNED UP! YOURS TRULY, AL MORTON, WAS THE EXCLUSIVE PROMOTER OF...



## THE MAN WHO PAINTED on AIR



81827

THE NIGHT I MET HIM, I WAS DOWN IN THE DUMPS! A SERIES OF FLOPEROOS HAD LEFT ME FLAT BROKE, AND I WAS SITTING IN A CAFETERIA, FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF, WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN I SPOTTED THIS SCREWBALL WITH THE BERET...

HMPF... AND I THOUGHT I HAD TROUBLES! THAT REFUGEE FROM A BOOBY HATCH IS TALKING TO HIMSELF... WITH GESTURES YET!

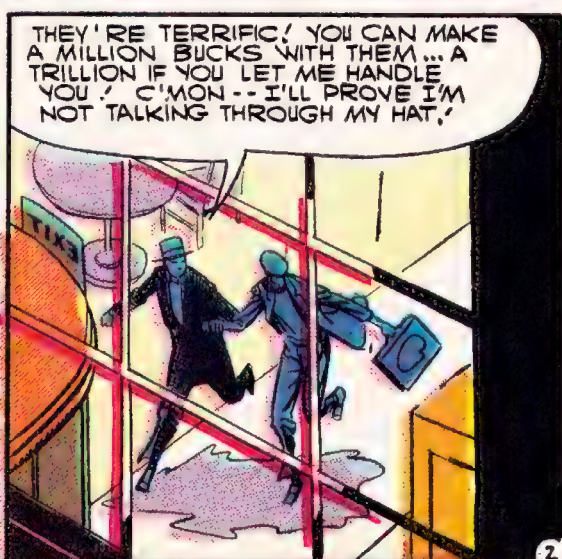
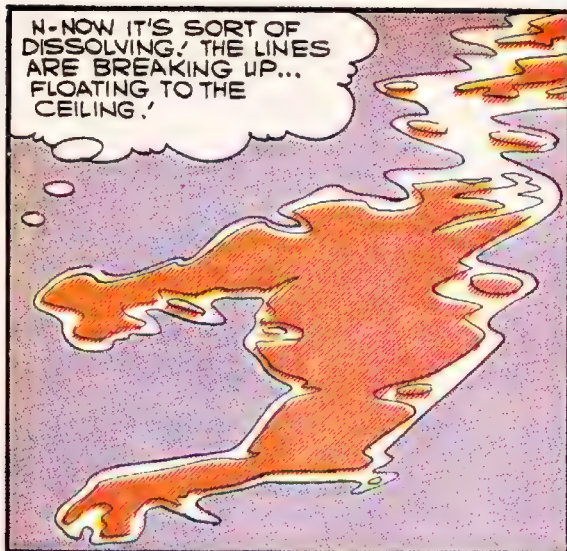


BUT THEN I LOOKED CLOSER...

H-HE HAS A BRUSH IN HIS HAND! HE'S PAINTING ON AIR!







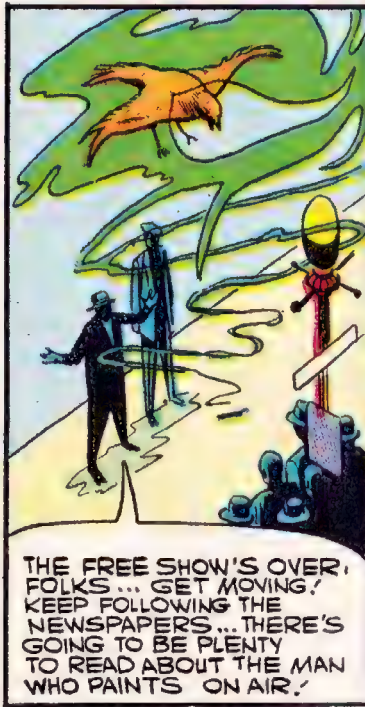


NOW GO AHEAD... PAINT  
ONE RIGHT OUT HERE!

B-BUT...

DO WHAT I TELL YOU! I  
WANT EVERYBODY TO  
SEE! AND JUST  
WATCH THEIR  
EYES POP!

I AM  
IN YOUR  
HANDS...



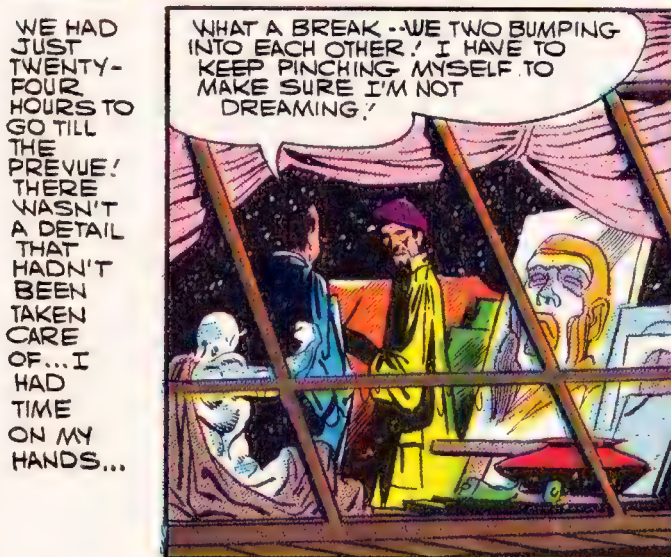
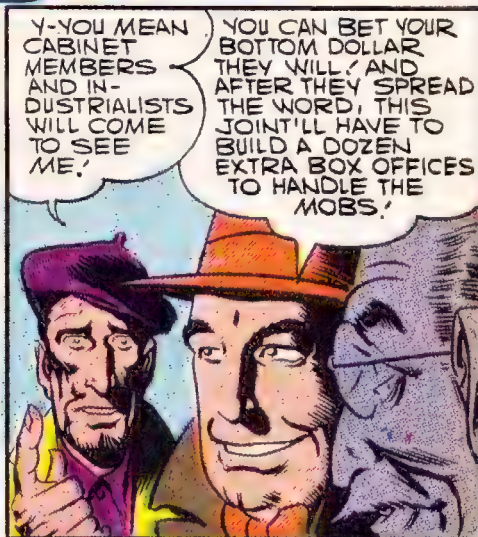
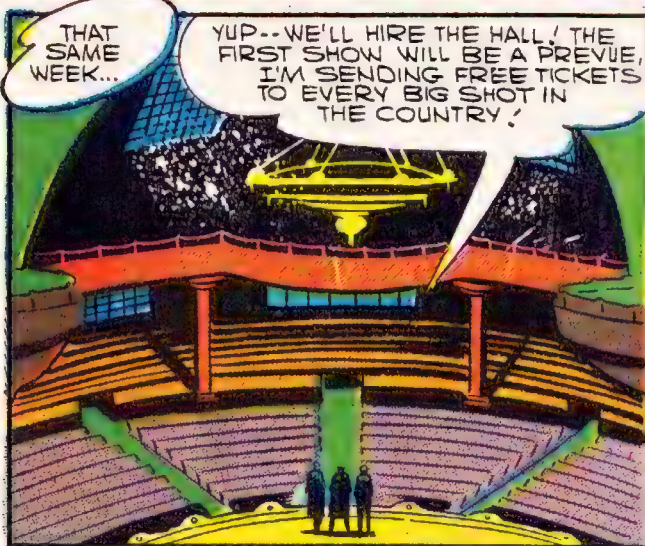
I WAS PULLING HIM AWAY,  
YAKKING SO HARD ABOUT  
HOW THE CROWD'S REACTION  
PROVED HOW MUCH DOUGH  
WE COULD CLEAN UP, THAT  
I HARDLY HEARD WHAT THE  
OLD DAME SAID...



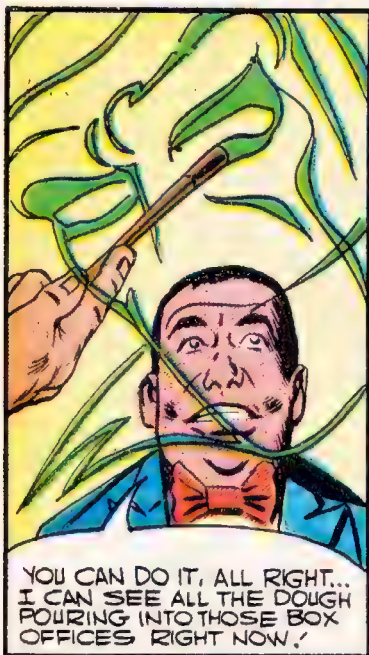




THEY ATE UP EVERY WORD! WE WOUND UP WITH MORE HEADLINES THAN THE HOPE DIAMOND HAS CARATS...







YOU CAN DO IT, ALL RIGHT... I CAN SEE ALL THE DOUGH POURING INTO THOSE BOX OFFICES RIGHT NOW.'



YOU FEEL MUCH BETTER, EH ?

YOU CAN SAY THAT IN SPADES.'



BUT THEN...

HEY--THAT MOTH! WHEN THE GAS-PAINT HIT IT... IT DROPPED DEAD!

THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT...

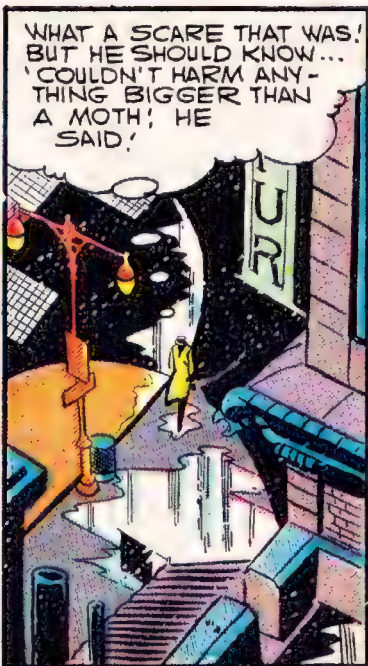


THE GAS IS ONLY VERY SLIGHTLY NOXIOUS! IT COULD NOT POSSIBLY HARM ANY-THING LARGER THAN A MOTH.'

WHEW! THOUGHT FOR A SECOND I'D HAVE TO CALL OFF THE SHOW! SO LONG, I'LL PICK YOU UP TOMORROW!



GOOD NIGHT! TRY TO SLEEP... AS I SHALL DO THE MOMENT I CLOSE THE DOOR.'



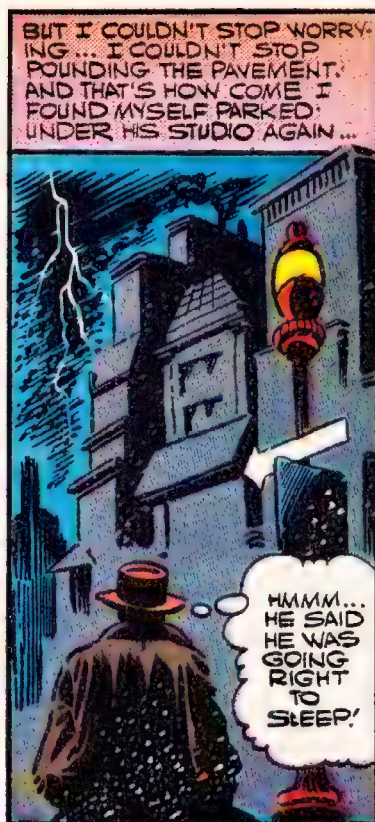
WHAT A SCARE THAT WAS! BUT HE SHOULD KNOW... 'COULDN'T HARM ANY-THING BIGGER THAN A MOTH! HE SAID.'



ALL OF A SUDDEN SOMETHING CLICKED UP WHERE MY THINK-CELLS ARE...

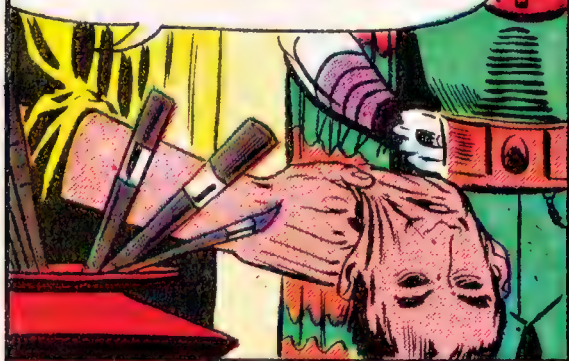
HEY ?!







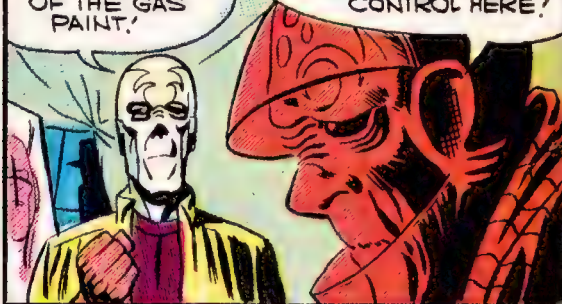
IT IS GOOD THAT WE CHOSE SO WISELY! ANY OTHER EARTHLING MIGHT HAVE WONDERED OVERMUCH OF THE NATURE OF THE GAS-PAINT... HE MIGHT HAVE REALIZED THAT UP TILL NOW YOU HAVE ONLY USED IT IN TINY QUANTITIES IN ORDER TO DISGUISE THE FACT THAT IT IS A POWERFUL POISON!



...AND THEN HE MIGHT HAVE SEEN THROUGH OUR PLAN TO ELIMINATE HIS COUNTRY'S LEADERS OF GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY! FOR AT THE PREVUE TOMORROW, I SHALL PAINT A MAMMOTH AIR PICTURE, USING OUR TOTAL SUPPLY OF THE GAS PAINT.

YES - AND THEN THE GAS PAINT SHALL DRIFT OUT TO THE AUDIENCE...

THIS GREAT COUNTRY SHALL LOSE ITS LEADERS... AND WE OF THE PLANET XORDU SHALL GAIN CONTROL HERE!



I GO NOW -- SUCCESS TO YOUR MISSION!

THERE IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT! NOTHING SHALL GO WRONG!



'N-NOTHING SHALL GO WRONG! HE SAID! THE BIGGEST SMASHEROO ANY PROMOTER EVER HAD... AND (SOS) IT HAD TO TURN OUT TO BE A COOKED-UP SUCKER DEAL LIKE THIS!



I GOTTA DO SOMETHING FAST... BUT WHAT?

YOU'LL FIND OUT LATER WHAT I DID... BUT THIS WAS THE NEXT NIGHT NOW... THIS WAS THE DRESSING ROOM! IN FIVE MINUTES THE CURTAIN WOULD GO UP...

Y-YOU ALL RIGHT? EVERYTHING R-READY?







THERE IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT... NOTHING SHALL GO WRONG.'



HE'S HEADING FOR THE STAGE.' THIS HAS TO WORK ... IT HAS TO.'



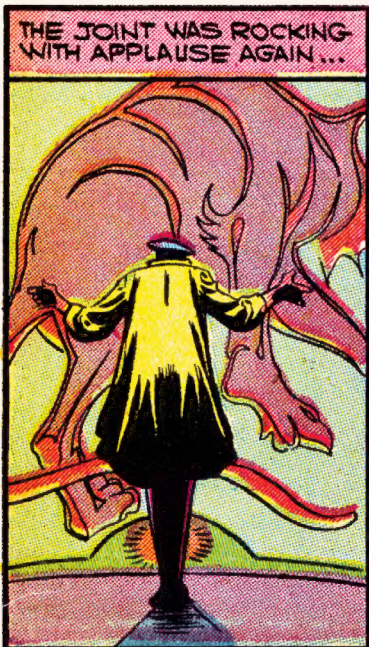
I WASN'T THERE TO HEAR IT-- BUT THE JOINT WAS ROCKING WHEN HE TOOK HIS BOW ...

THE FLOOD-LIGHTS ARE SO STRONG, I CANNOT SEE THE AUDIENCE! BUT MY VICTIMS ARE THERE ... I CAN HEAR THEM APPLAUDING.'

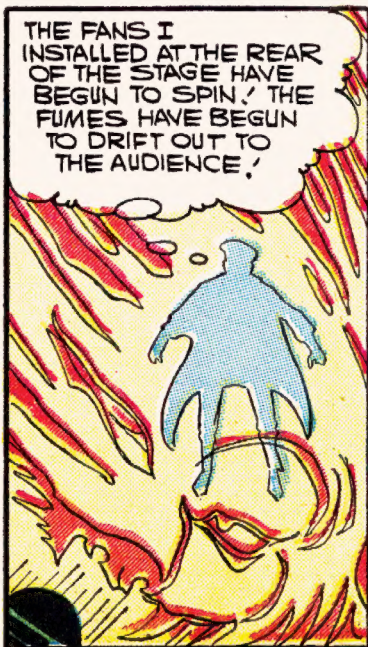
THEN HE STARTED TO PAINT ON AIR... AND ALL THE TIME HE PAINTED, HE COULDN'T HEAR A PIN DROP...



LET THEM FEAST THEIR EYES! SOON THEY SHALL SEE ONLY THE DARKNESS OF DEATH.'



THE JOINT WAS ROCKING WITH APPLAUSE AGAIN ...

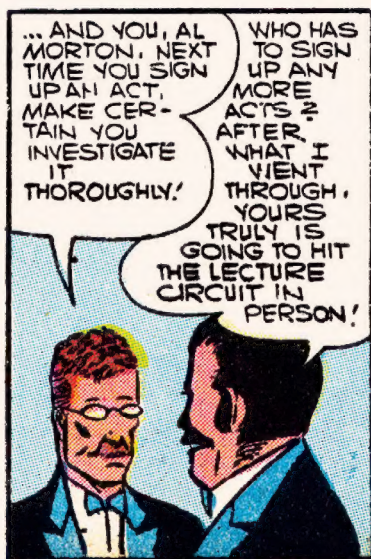
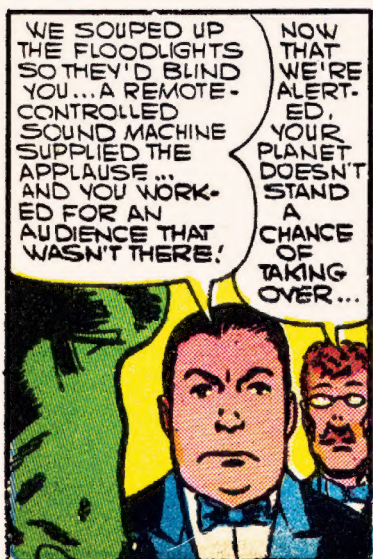
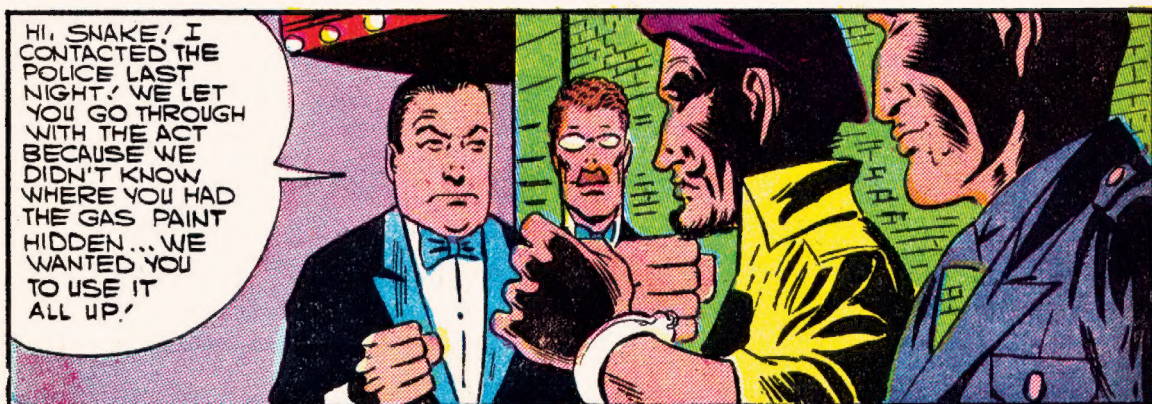
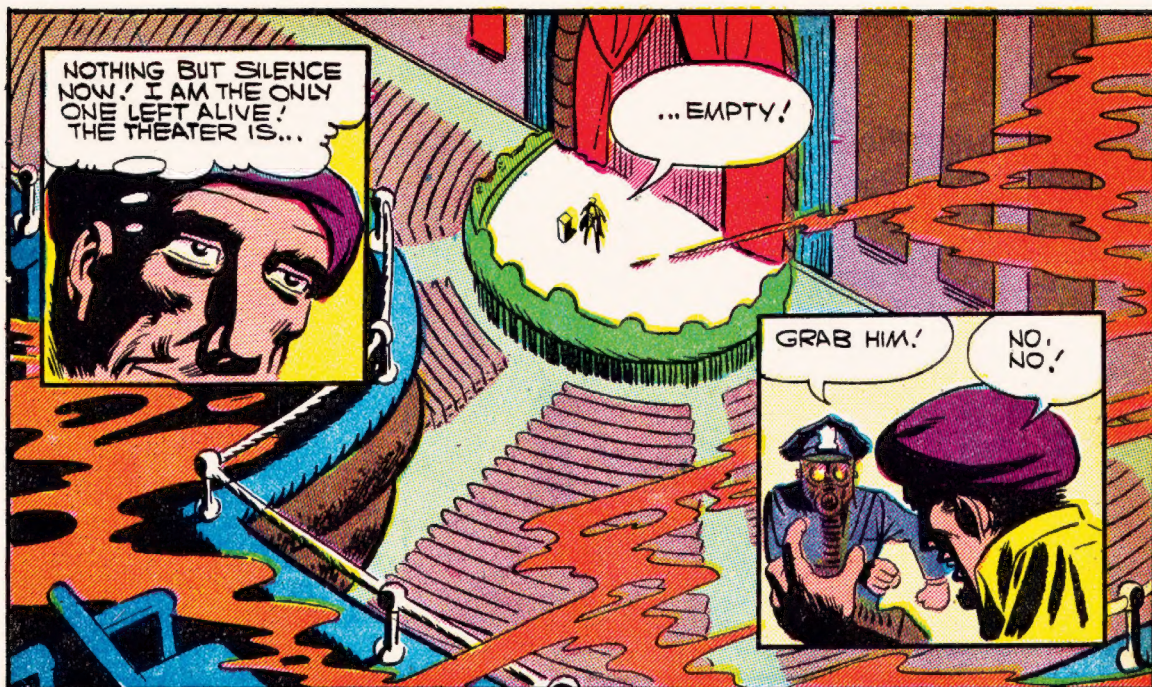


THE FANS I INSTALLED AT THE REAR OF THE STAGE HAVE BEGUN TO SPIN! THE FUMES HAVE BEGUN TO DRIFT OUT TO THE AUDIENCE.'



I AM IMMUNE, BUT EARTH-LINGS ARE NOT.'





END



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is dedicated to my best friend and son, Luke Bell. I would also like to thank everyone at Fantagraphics for continuing to spotlight Ditko's valuable legacy of pre-Spider-Man material. Many thanks, as well, to those who assisted with this project: Bob Bailey, W. Scott Bunley, Brian Franczak, Michael T. Gilbert, Michael Malkowicz, and William Riwald. And a special thanks to Steve Ditko for giving us all this wonderful work to enjoy.

The quotes in the introduction from Ed Konick and Joe Gill came from an article and interview by Christopher Irving and Jon B. Cooke in *Comic Book Artist* #9 (Aug '00). The quote from Fran Matera came from an interview by Jim Amash in *Alter Ego* #39 (Jun '06). The Nick Curi quote came from an interview by Jon B. Cooke in *Comic Book Artist* #12 (Mar '01).





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